



SUPERFUND UPDATE - DECEMBER 1987

ATLAS AND JOHNS-MANVILLE ASBESTOS MINE SITES RESULTS OF RECENT SOIL ANALYSES IN THE TOWN OF COALINGA

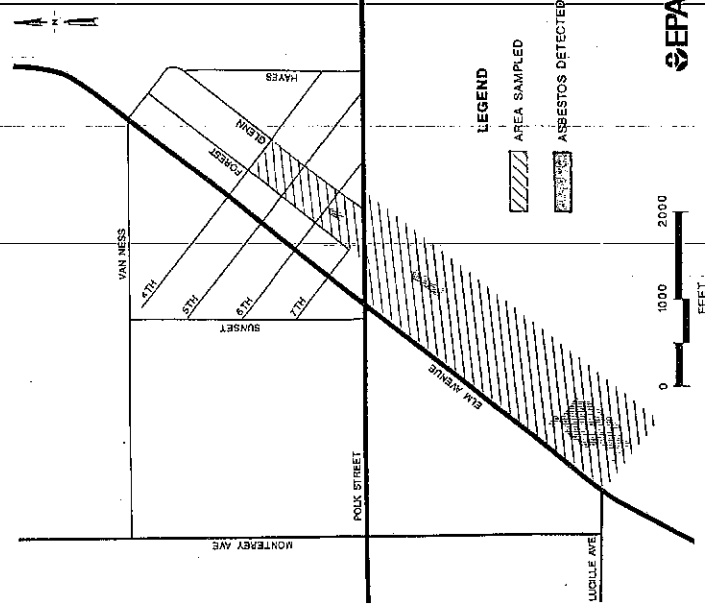
Summary. Recent analyses of soil samples taken from the vicinity of former asbestos warehouses along Elm Avenue in Coalinga have shown some areas where asbestos levels are greater than 50% asbestos by weight (where one pound of soil contains more than one-half pound of asbestos). These areas have been fenced and sprayed with a sealant to prevent the asbestos from moving. The current landowner, Southern Pacific Transportation Company (SPTC), is developing plans for cleanup under the supervision of EPA. This update explains what areas have been investigated for asbestos in the soil, presents the results of analyses, and explains actions underway to control the potential problem.

The Problem. In the Spring of 1987, during its investigations of the Atlas and Johns-Manville asbestos mine Superfund sites, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) learned that there were several locations in Coalinga where asbestos milling and distribution activities took place. Given the past uses of these lands, EPA became concerned that soils at these locations may contain high levels of asbestos. If soils that contain asbestos are disturbed (either by winds or surface traffic), the activity can stir up dust and cause asbestos to enter the air. Airborne asbestos can cause lung cancer and other serious respiratory problems. Because of the potential public health hazard posed by these soils, EPA decided to investigate the asbestos content of the soils at these former asbestos warehouse locations.

Sampling Results. A preliminary EPA sampling program in June confirmed the presence of asbestos in the soil in the vicinity of former asbestos warehouses. In August, EPA notified SPTC of these findings, and asked SPTC to determine precisely where asbestos is present on lands presently or previously owned by SPTC in the area of the former asbestos warehouses. SPTC hired a consultant to conduct an intensive sampling program in October and November. While some samples are still being analysed, results received so far indicate that the amount of asbestos in the soil in this area varies from zero to greater than 50% asbestos by weight. When asbestos levels are high, EPA takes action to reduce the threat to public health from asbestos that may enter the air from asbestos-contaminated soils.

The map below shows the area in Coalinga that was sampled, and summarizes current findings. A final summary of complete results of the SPTC sampling program will be available in January. EPA will place a report of the results at the Coalinga Public Library, and will summarize the results in a factsheet.

AREA OF COALINGA SAMPLED FOR ASBESTOS IN SOIL



What Is Being Done. At present, areas in Coalinga where high asbestos levels were found have been fenced off. Some businesses have been asked by SPTC to move off these lands so that SPTC can continue with cleanup plans. Signs warning of the presence of asbestos have been posted around the fenced areas. A temporary biodegradable sealant was sprayed on most of the areas in October and November. As long as foot and vehicle traffic and other surface disturbances are kept to a minimum, the sealant will prevent the movement of asbestos from soil to air. **PLEASE HELP MAINTAIN THE SEAL BY STAYING OUTSIDE THE FENCED AREAS AND OFF THE SPRAYED SURFACES.**

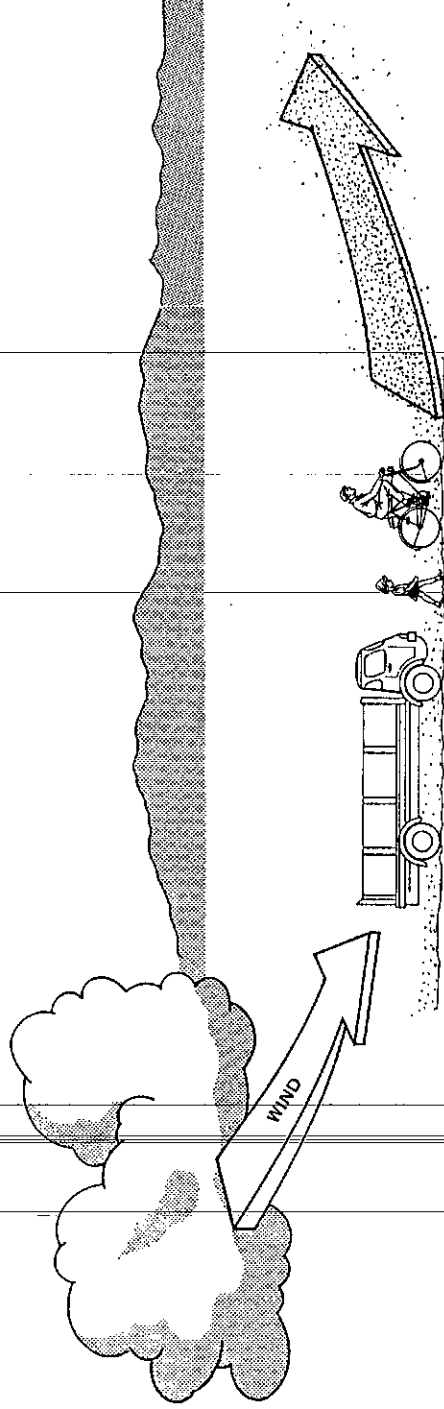
SPTC is presently deciding how to permanently clean up this area. They are considering such actions as removing the asbestos-contaminated soils or paving over the warehouse areas. Details will be provided in a future EPA factsheet early next year. Assuming no unforeseen difficulties, cleanup should begin in the spring of 1988.

What You Can Do to Minimize the Problem. Until cleanup is complete, it is essential to preserve the sealant on the asbestos so that the asbestos does not become airborne. Please:

- Stay outside the fenced and posted areas.
- Keep trucks, cars, bicycles outside the fenced and posted areas.
- Don't let children play inside the fenced and posted areas.
- Avoid raising dust in and around the fenced and posted areas.

Thank you for your help and cooperation.

BREATHING ASBESTOS DUST IS A PROBLEM



Please, stay off fenced areas!



For Further Information

If you have any questions or comments, or if you would like to receive additional copies of this fact sheet, please contact:

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