

What is holding up getting rid of the Rotunda nursing home? I have heard there is an asbestos issue. Is that true?

It is correct that during a 2010 assessment by an Environmental Consultant hired by the Army Corps of Engineers found asbestos containing materials in the Rotunda. Abating and removing the asbestos is a highly-regulated and very expensive process. Cost estimates to abate and dispose of these materials in the main facility and one remaining wing approach \$500,000.

It is estimated that there is approximately:

- 66,000 square feet of textured walls and ceilings that contain asbestos;

- 27,386 square feet of flooring (sheet and tile) that contains asbestos.

These materials must be abated and disposed of in an authorized landfill before the facility can be demolished.

What is Asbestos and how is it used?

Asbestos is a group of minerals that occur naturally as bundles of fibers in rock and soil. Asbestos has been mined and used commercially in North America since the late 1800s. Asbestos has been used in the building and construction industries for strengthening cement and plastics as well as for insulation, roofing, fireproofing, and sound absorption. Asbestos has also been used in ceiling and floor tiles; paints, coatings, and adhesives; and plastics. However, it's still used in some products, and it's still possible to be exposed to asbestos in older buildings, water pipes, and other settings.

In 1977, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) banned the use of asbestos in wallboard patching compounds because the asbestos fibers in these products could be released into the environment during use. In 1989, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) banned all new uses of asbestos; however, uses developed before 1989 are still allowed.

What are the health hazards of exposure to asbestos?

People may be exposed to asbestos in their workplace, their communities, or their homes. If products containing asbestos are disturbed, tiny asbestos fibers are released into the air. When asbestos fibers are breathed in, they may get trapped in the lungs and remain there for a long time. Over time, these fibers can accumulate and cause scarring and inflammation, which can affect breathing and lead to serious health problems. Generally, those who develop asbestos-related diseases show no signs of illness for a long time after exposure. It can take from 10 to 40 years or more for symptoms of an asbestos-related condition to appear.

Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry. [*Health Effects of Asbestos*](#), and [*Toxicological Profile for Asbestos*](#).

Asbestos exposure is also a concern in older buildings. If building materials that contain asbestos (like older insulation and ceiling and floor tiles) begin to decompose over time, asbestos fibers can be found in indoor air and may pose a health threat. There is no health risk if the asbestos is bonded into intact finished products, such as walls and tiles. As long as the material is not damaged or disturbed (for example, by drilling or remodeling), the fibers are not released into the air. Removing asbestos from homes and other buildings can also cause some exposure, although modern asbestos abatement workers are trained to use proper protective equipment to minimize exposure.

How are asbestos-related diseases detected?

Individuals who have been exposed (or suspect they have been exposed) to asbestos fibers through the environment should inform their doctor about their exposure history and whether or not they experience any symptoms. The symptoms of asbestos-related diseases may not become apparent for many decades after the exposure. It is particularly important to check with a doctor if any of the following symptoms develop:

- Shortness of breath, wheezing, or hoarseness
- A persistent cough that gets worse over time
- Blood in the sputum (fluid) coughed up from the lungs
- Pain or tightening in the chest
- Difficulty swallowing
- Swelling of the neck or face
- Loss of appetite
- Weight loss
- Fatigue or anemia

Does asbestos cause cancer?

Evidence from studies in both people and lab animals has shown that asbestos can increase the risk for some types of cancer. When asbestos fibers in the air are inhaled, they can stick to mucus in the throat, trachea (windpipe), or bronchi (large breathing tubes of the lungs) and might be cleared by being coughed up or swallowed. But some fibers reach the ends of the small airways in the lungs or penetrate into the outer lining of the lung and chest wall (known as the *pleura*). These fibers can irritate the cells in the lung or pleura and eventually cause lung cancer or mesothelioma.

Based on animal and human evidence, several expert agencies have evaluated the cancer-causing nature of asbestos.

The **International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC)** classifies asbestos as “carcinogenic to humans,” based on its ability to cause mesothelioma and cancers of the lung, larynx (voice box), and ovaries.

The **National Toxicology Program (NTP)** has classified asbestos as “known to be a human carcinogen.” The NTP is formed from parts of several different US government agencies, including the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

The **US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)** classifies asbestos as a human carcinogen.

You can learn more about the research on asbestos exposure and cancer at the following:

<https://www.epa.gov/asbestos/learn-about-asbestos>

<https://www.cancer.org/cancer/cancer-causes/asbestos.html>

<https://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/causes-prevention/risk/substances/asbestos/asbestos-fact-sheet>

I have heard that the Rotunda is considered a brownfield – what does that mean?

A brownfield is a property - the expansion, redevelopment, or reuse of which may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant. It is estimated that there are more than 450,000 brownfields in the U.S.

The City intends to apply for a 2020 Brownfields Cleanup grant from the Environmental Protection Agency in order to abate and dispose of the asbestos containing materials in the facility. Begun in 1995, EPA's Brownfields Program is designed to empower communities and other stakeholders in economic redevelopment to work together in a timely manner to prevent, assess, safely clean up, and sustainably reuse brownfields.

If the City is awarded an EPA Brownfields Cleanup Grant, what will it do with the site?

The City's plan is to construct a new Police Station and Municipal Office facility at the site. The current Police Station is 60 years old and very undersized to house the current Police functions, dispatch (police/fire/EMS), and evidence storage. Locating the Police Station further east in the City will allow for a quicker response time to those areas that the data indicates are where most incidents/accidents occur.