



Supreme Perlite Portland, Oregon

Summary Factsheet



Health Consultation Completed

The Oregon Department of Human Services, Superfund Health Investigation and Education (SHINE) Program in cooperation with the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) has evaluated the potential for health risks associated with asbestos from vermiculite ore that was received from Libby, Montana and processed at Supreme Perlite in Portland, Oregon.

The evaluation focused on ways that people could have been or may be exposed to asbestos from vermiculite processed at this site from 1968 through 1974. This factsheet outlines some of the important findings from the evaluation.

What are the conclusions of this health consultation?

Former workers and household members (people who lived with them, including children during the time they worked at Supreme Perlite) should learn more about asbestos and see a physician trained in asbestos-related lung disease. Workers employed at Supreme Perlite during 1968-1974 were exposed to elevated levels of Libby asbestos as a result of working in and around the facility. Household contacts of former workers were also likely to have been exposed to Libby asbestos brought home on clothing and hair of workers.

Could I be exposed to asbestos from this site now?

People who live and work around this property are unlikely to be exposed to

asbestos from the site. Most of the potentially contaminated soil has been cleaned up or covered. Exposure to Libby asbestos in soil under the concrete pad behind the building and along the edge of the building is unlikely unless the concrete is removed and soil in these areas is disturbed.

Exposure to waste products from the site is unlikely because there is no evidence that there were waste products or waste piles from vermiculite processing, and workers did not remove vermiculite materials from the site for personal use.

Could I have been exposed to asbestos from this site in the past?

You were probably exposed to asbestos from this site if you:

- Worked at this facility when it processed vermiculite, or
- Lived with someone who worked at the facility when vermiculite was processed there.



What are the health effects of asbestos exposure?

Exposure to asbestos does not necessarily mean that a person will become ill as a result of the exposure. Breathing in asbestos fibers that can be released from asbestos-contaminated vermiculite may increase a person's likelihood of developing lung cancer, mesothelioma (a cancer of the outer lining of the lungs and/or abdominal cavity), lung abnormalities and breathing disorders. Repeated and prolonged exposure to high levels of asbestos increases the chances of developing these diseases.

What is the history of the site?

From 1968 until 1974, the Supreme Perlite facility processed vermiculite at their facility at 4600 N. Suttle Road in Portland. Some of the vermiculite was from Libby, Montana, and was found to contain asbestos.

The facility exfoliated (expanded or

"popped") vermiculite to manufacture attic insulation. The Supreme Perlite plant processed more than 600 tons of Libby vermiculite.

The area around Supreme Perlite is zoned heavy industrial. The nearest residences are houseboats located a quarter mile to the northeast.

EPA identified the site for further investigation after sampling found asbestos contamination in an area where Libby vermiculite was unloaded from rail cars. Cleanup of the contaminated soil was completed in April 2001. EPA has no further action planned or required at this time for vermiculite cleanup at the Supreme Perlite site.

Where can I get more information?

The health consultation report is available at www.healthoregon.org/superfund. For more information, call Amanda Guay at 503-872-5357.

What is vermiculite?

Vermiculite is a naturally occurring mineral compound. It is composed of shiny stone flakes and looks like mica. In the past, much of the world's supply of vermiculite came from a mine near Libby, Montana. After years of mining, the Libby mine was found to have a natural deposit of asbestos, and the vermiculite from Libby contains asbestos.

What is "asbestos exposure"?

Breathing in asbestos fibers is called asbestos exposure. When asbestos fibers are breathed into your lungs, they may remain there for a lifetime. In some cases, these fibers might damage your lungs or the linings of your lungs and cause illness or even death.

What is asbestos?

Asbestos is the name of several fibrous minerals that occur naturally in the environment. Asbestos is composed of separable, long, and thin "needlelike" fibers. The asbestos fibers in vermiculite are too small to be seen by the naked eye.