Yard Work and Gardening Activities

What To Do If You Are Working In Your Yard and Come Across Soil That Contains Vermiculite or Asbestos

Revised: January 2014

Vermiculite In Libby & Troy

For several decades, vermiculite was commonly used in and around homes in Lincoln County for a variety of applications, including as a soil additive, construction aggregate, and attic insulation. If vermiculite is present, it might contain Libby Amphibole asbestos (LA).

Exposure to LA could lead to serious diseases such as asbestosis, lung cancer, and mesothelioma. It will take several more years for EPA to complete the cleanup, and property owners might encounter vermiculite during that time or even after EPA has finished its work. It is not possible for EPA to remove (or to even know about) *all* the vermiculite in the area.

It is possible that you might unexpectedly find vermiculite after starting your yard work or gardening activities. If you do, EPA strongly cautions you not to disturb it further and cause LA to become airborne.

Precautionary Steps To Take While Working In Your Yard

The Do's:

1. **Do** water often. A healthy lawn reduces dust and contact with bare soil.
2. **Do** mow your lawn or roto-till your garden when it's damp—not when it's dry or dusty.
3. **Do** rinse off any rental equipment within your work area before returning the equipment.
4. **Do** rinse off gardening tools outside within your work area after every use.
5. **Do** wipe your feet and/or take your shoes off at the door and leave them outside, if possible.
6. **Do** wash your hands outdoors after any yard work, if possible.
7. **Do** call the **Lincoln County Asbestos Resource Program (ARP)** **at no cost to you** if you see ANY vermiculite on your property, even if you are unsure. While waiting for ARP to arrive, take precautions to not disturb the area.

The Don'ts:

1. **Don't** disturb areas where you can see vermiculite. If it's a place you intend to work in, cover the vermiculite and call ERS.
2. **Don't** dig, cultivate, mow, rake or roto-till your yard or garden when it's dry or dusty.
3. **Don't** bring dusty or dirty things indoors.

The photo on the immediate right is an example of raw vermiculite in soils. When heated, vermiculite exfoliates (or pops), forming a lightweight material ideal for packing, insulation, and as a soil additive as shown in the far right photo.

Cautions regarding Libby Amphibole:

- LA should be avoided or handled with extreme care.
- Exposure to Libby Amphibole asbestos has resulted in disease in workers and non-workers who have had contact with contaminated materials. Take care not to bring any contaminated clothing or material back to your home or business.
- Treat any asbestos containing material as regulated material and comply with all state and local regulations.

There is no known threshold risk level for asbestos-containing materials, and any exposure will increase the risk of asbestos-related disease. The health risk from exposure to **all** asbestos depends greatly on the amount of asbestos in the material you are disturbing and how long the exposure lasts. If you take the basic precautions outlined in this fact sheet, your project will be completed with minimal exposure to LA.

Who Can I Contact With Questions About Asbestos?

EPA Information Center – 108 E. 9th Street; Libby, MT 59923 – (406) 293-6194
Lincoln County Asbestos Resource Program (ARP) – (406) 291-5335
Montana Department of Environmental Quality –
Asbestos Control Program (406) 444-5300

Please learn about the risks of asbestos exposure and basic precautions by reviewing the fact sheets available at the **Information Centers** or the website listed below:

- **HEPA Vacuum Cleaner Program** – *Revised January 2014*
- **Lincoln County Do-It-Yourselfers** – *Revised January 2014*
- **Contractors & Tradesmen Working Indoors** – *Revised January 2014*
- **Contractors & Tradesmen Working Outdoors** – *Revised January 2014*
- **Libby & Troy Residents: Vermiculite or Asbestos In or Around Your Home or Business** – *Revised January 2014*
- **Demolition Activities** – *Revised January 2014*

Explore the EPA website and its links at: www2.epa.gov/region8/libby-asbestos