

MIFFLIN COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT

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PRESS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: Vance S. Varner, Superintendent

This news release is to provide a recap and update on the possible asbestos exposure at the Mifflin County Academy of Science and Technology (The Academy).

The Academy administration was notified at approximately 10:45 a.m. on 08/30/2024 that individuals from the Construction Trades program removed a chalkboard from the wall of their classroom on 08/29/2024 during the afternoon session, possibly exposing them to asbestos.

Upon receiving this notification, the Construction Trades classroom was sealed off and samples of the material thought to possibly contain asbestos (mastic) were taken immediately for testing.

The test results were received at approximately 3:45 p.m. on 08/30/2024 which reported an 8% concentration of asbestos in the mastic.

Upon receipt of these results, the Construction Trades classroom was ordered to remain closed and the parents/guardians of the students who were present in the Construction Trades classroom when the chalkboard was removed were notified by the Academy's administration that the existence of asbestos containing materials had been confirmed. A certified inspection company was consulted and a plan for the testing was established.

At approximately 8:00 p.m., the administration learned that a power tool, later identified as an oscillating tool with a scraping blade, was used to remove the mastic glue off the wall after the chalkboard was removed.

This new information resulted in the Administration being concerned that airborne particles of asbestos had been released due to the use of the power tool. It was this concern that formed the basis for the decision to close the Academy to all students and staff until further notice.

A certified inspection company was contacted again to address these concerns and do further testing.

The certified inspection company immediately started developing a revised asbestos testing plan. The following are the action steps and results:

1. Extensive air testing and surface testing for asbestos was performed;
2. 15 samples were taken throughout the building to include HVAC ductwork and filters;
3. Surface asbestos testing was completed in the Construction Trades classroom. Asbestos was present on a filing cabinet adjacent to the mastic that was removed in the Construction Trades classroom. A teacher's desk, four feet away, and a student's desk, 15 feet away from the filing cabinet, were found to be "none detected" for the presence of asbestos;
4. Five air samples were taken in the Construction Trades shop area. Three of these samples had "none detected" for the presence of asbestos. Two of the samples had results indicating the minimum detectable level of asbestos was present for the test method used. One asbestos structure was found in each of these two samples. The asbestos structure number is used to calculate the concentration of asbestos present. The average of the five samples was 6.4 structures per millimeter squared. The EPA maximum allowable average is 70.0 structures per millimeter squared;
5. Air samples taken from the hallways outside of the Construction Trades classroom were found to be "none detected" for the presence of asbestos;
6. Surface samples from the return air duct of the Construction Trades classroom and the central air handler filters for the entire building were found to be "none detected" for the presence of asbestos;
7. As a result of the surface testing samples from the Construction Trades classroom, an abatement company was contracted to perform an environmental cleanup in the Construction Trades classroom;
8. This environmental cleanup in the Construction Trades classroom was completed on Tuesday, 09/03/2024;
9. Following the environmental cleanup, aggressive asbestos air testing using a blower to suspend settled particles, which included five testing samples, was completed in the Construction Trades classroom. The results of this asbestos air testing were found to be "none detected" for the presence of asbestos; and
10. As a result of all the protocols followed and asbestos testing results received, Mifflin County Academy of Science and Technology (The Academy) will reopen for instruction on Friday, 09/06/2024.



Vance S. Varner
Superintendent
Mifflin County School District