# ACTIVITY-BASED AIR SAMPLING AT RESIDENCES NEAR THE BORIT ASBESTOS SITE, SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER 2016

## Site Background

The BoRit Asbestos Site is a Superfund site that consists of three distinct asbestos-contaminated areas, including an asbestos waste pile, a reservoir, and a former and future park along Maple Street in Ambler, Montgomery County, Pennsylvania. The site resulted from past disposal practices from asbestos manufacturing on and near the site from the late 1800s until 1987. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) oversees remedial activities related to the site, while the Pennsylvania Department of Health (PADOH) and the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) have provided public health guidance. The agencies have conducted public health activities related to the BoRit site for many years. Most recently, ATSDR evaluated activity-based air sampling data collected in the fall of 2016.

### How were the air samples collected?

- EPA conducted air sampling in 10 residential yards along the perimeter of the site on Sept. 22, 23, 26, and Oct. 6, 2016.

- The contractors conducted a raking scenario for two hours to simulate an activity that would likely disturb asbestos fibers in soil.

- Personal air monitors were worn by contractors at shoulder-level to represent an adult's exposure, and

- at waist-level to represent a child's exposure.

- Each yard had three stationary air monitors to represent exposures at the perimeter of the activity.

- "Background" air samples were taken each day at a location down the road from the 10 residential yards, away from any activity, to be used for comparison.

Breathing in invisible airborne asbestos fibers increases a person's risk of developing certain cancers and non-cancer lung diseases many years after the exposure.



Photos: asbestos-containing pipe insulation (above) and asbestos-cement roof panels (left).

Learn more about asbestos-containing materials on the next page.

The activity-based sampling event simulated raking activities that would likely disturb asbestos fibers in soil and suspend the fibers in the air.

ATSDR believes the results of this sampling adequately and conservatively represent potential exposures to homeowners spending time and working in their yards.

## What we learned from the results:

Potential asbestos exposures to people performing activities in the residential yards tested are not expected to harm health.



BoRit Asbestos Site, Park Area ♦ Photo by PADOH ♦ December 2016

# What do the results mean for the community?

- ATSDR and PADOH encourage residents to continue their regular activities around their homes.

- Residents may consider taking action to reduce **potential** exposure to asbestos in the environment (see box below) due to the following reasons:
    - Although too low to harm health, low levels of total asbestos were detected in the activity-based air samples.
    - The homes are in close proximity to a former asbestos processing facility.
    - Other residential sources of asbestos may be present in homes.

## What's next for ATSDR and PADOH?

- ATSDR and PADOH will remain available to discuss any public health questions related to the site with community members and local authorities, and will continue participation on the BoRit Community Advisory Group.

- ATSDR and PADOH will consider evaluating future environmental sampling data collected near the BoRit site, if requested by EPA or community members.
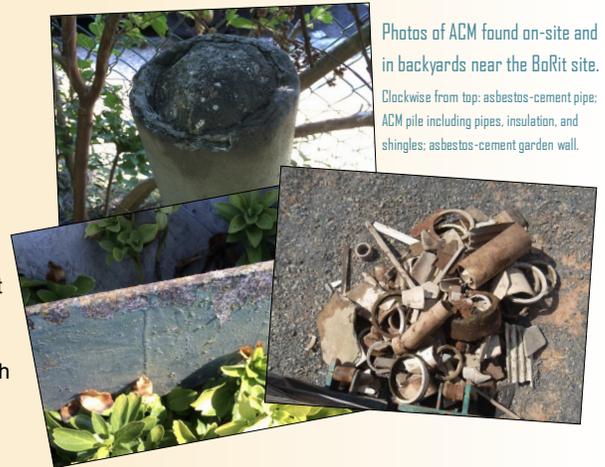
## How can you limit your potential exposure to asbestos in your environment?



- Wear a respirator mask when mowing the lawn. They can be purchased at most hardware stores and drug stores.
- Keep windows and doors closed on windy days and during nearby construction.
- Use a wet rag for dusting, instead of a dry rag or duster.

- Use a wet mop on non-carpeted floors.
- Vacuum often using a vacuum with a high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filter.
- Use doormats and remove shoes before entering your home.
- Use washable area rugs on floors and wash them often.

- Remove asbestos-containing materials (ACM) from your home. See below for more information on ACM.
- Always avoid abandoned building sites and do not trespass. Instruct and monitor children to do the same.

## Be aware of possible asbestos-containing materials in and around your home:

- Some examples of ACM are:
    - pipe and boiler insulation/ lagging
    - sprayed insulation
    - textured ceilings
    - vinyl floor tiles
    - asbestos-cement building materials

- ACM is most dangerous when it is <u>friable</u>, meaning it is able to break apart or crumble into smaller pieces, releasing asbestos fibers into the air you breathe.

- In some areas, <u>non-friable</u> ACM can be double-bagged and placed out with your trash. Contact your waste removal company to confirm.

- Certified asbestos contractors are able to safely remove ACM from your home.

- If you suspect you have ACM in your home, contractors certified in asbestos removal can be found on the Department of Labor and Industry's website (http://www.dli.pa.gov/Individuals/Labor-Management-Relations/bois/Pages/Asbestos-Occupations.aspx#e).



Photos of ACM found on-site and in backyards near the BoRit site.

Clockwise from top: asbestos-cement pipe; ACM pile including pipes, insulation, and shingles; asbestos-cement garden wall.