

Naturally Occurring Asbestos in El Dorado Hills

WHY IS ATSDR HERE?

ATSDR is a federal public health agency. ATSDR works with people who may be affected by hazardous substances where they live. We tell people whether chemicals released into the environment can reach people and make them sick. We tell people how to protect themselves from harmful levels of these chemicals and what local agencies need to do to protect the community from harm.

Some rocks in and around El Dorado Hills contain a mineral called asbestos. This asbestos is there naturally – it is not from a hazardous waste site. Asbestos breaks up into tiny pieces that can harm people's lungs or cause cancer, if they breathe it in. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) measured asbestos in El Dorado Hills in the year 2004. ATSDR studied EPA's results and is now releasing a scientific report about whether the asbestos can make people sick and what needs to be done.

WHAT DID ATSDR DO?

We used the EPA results and information about what people do in El Dorado Hills to get a general idea of how much asbestos people might breathe in over their lifetime. Then we used scientific methods to project how much breathing in that asbestos would increase a person's risk of cancer. There are many methods for doing this; we used four methods and compared the results.

WHAT DID ATSDR FIND?

People living or working in El Dorado Hills could breathe in more asbestos than some other people in the U.S., but we don't think they breathe as much as asbestos workers or other people who became sick from asbestos. The risk of getting cancer from breathing asbestos is a little higher in El Dorado Hills than in other places. But we don't currently have the tools to find people who have cancer that was definitely caused by naturally occurring asbestos.

HOW CAN WE AVOID ASBESTOS?

- Although you can't see asbestos, you can avoid breathing it by trying to avoid breathing dust during your normal activities. Things that can help you avoid asbestos include:
 - » cleaning your house with a wet rag instead of a dry duster,
 - » wetting down your garden before digging in it, and
 - » staying on paved paths and roads during outdoor activities.

ATSDR has more recommendations online at: www.atsdr.cdc.gov/noa.

- The county and state have rules that construction companies must follow to keep dust from leaving work sites. They should enforce these rules, and find a way to record where asbestos is as more is discovered.
- If these precautions are followed, your exposure and risk of getting sick will be reduced. The state should keep looking at the area's cancer rates to make sure they don't go up. And if you are worried about breathing in asbestos, you should talk to your doctor.
- Scientists are still learning about asbestos and how it causes disease. If we learn anything that changes our findings, we will tell you.