

# NEWS

## From GEORGIA TECH'S ENGINEERING EXPERIMENT STATION

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GEORGIA TECH SEEKS WAYS  
TO COAT ASBESTOS INSULATION

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ATLANTA, GA....Asbestos still threatens public health despite the fact that most spray applications of the manmade fiber were banned in the United States in 1973.

Thousands of old school buildings throughout the United States still have their original coatings of asbestos insulation. Public health officials fear that some of this asbestos will be released into the air children breathe as these schools sustain normal wear and tear.

Asbestos spray applications were first used in England in 1932 and quickly became popular in the United States for insulation, sealing and decorative purposes in the construction industry. By 1950, more than half the buildings in America had asbestos in some form and eighteen years later, 40,000 tons of the fiber had been sprayed in this country.

In 1973, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) banned spray applications with more than one percent asbestos after medical findings showed that the substance contributes to asbestosis, cancer and other respiratory diseases.

"There's a lot of concern about this," says Georgia Tech research scientist James Hubbard. "EPA has asked school systems throughout the U.S. to survey their buildings and assess their asbestos problems."

Georgia Tech's Engineering Experiment Station helped the State of Georgia evaluate insulation in every school district in Georgia last summer. Institute researchers are doing similar work for Florida schools.

(more)

Hubbard is now involved in an asbestos management program in Fulton County, Georgia, whose school system serves the City of Atlanta. The Tech physical scientist's role is to evaluate sealing materials which can be coated on insulation to keep asbestos from spreading into the atmosphere.

Hubbard is testing 16 possible sealants at a public school in Atlanta. His findings should be completed by the end of September. His report may be the first in the country to evaluate the effectiveness of asbestos sealing materials.

Heretofore, most management programs have involved removal of the fiber or erection of barriers (such as false ceilings) between the insulation and classrooms. However, Hubbard says these methods have proved in many cases to be highly expensive or unreliable.

After the current study is done, Hubbard will conduct a three-day short course in asbestos management at Georgia Tech. The seminar will be designed for owners and managers of buildings and will counsel them on how to keep old asbestos from threatening health safety on their properties.

The date of the first class has not been set yet, but Hubbard expects the course to be repeated several times each year.

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