

## **Information about sealant containing asbestos**

### **Was there a new finding of asbestos in our buildings?**

We have found asbestos fibres in a sealant used on cinder block masonry underneath the paint on the wall. The sealant likely dates back to original building construction. Tests conducted in the Medical Sciences Building where the material was first identified have indicated the building is safe.

### **Why didn't we know about it before?**

This sealant had very limited use, mostly in the 1960s. The University has a rigorous asbestos management program and has engaged experts in this field to conduct asbestos inventories for many years. The use of asbestos in paints is historically regarded as being relatively limited, and confined to a few specialized products. Until very recently, painted surfaces were not routinely sampled in any buildings as part of an asbestos assessment. Neither the University nor any of our consulting teams (and the University employed several different consulting firms for this work) had any reason to suspect it was present on our campus. The material was first identified in the Medical Sciences Building (MSB), when dust was found with asbestos fibres. The dust was below a hole drilled in a wall.

### **What is the university doing?**

This discovery prompted the University to conduct further testing of other campus buildings that were built around the same time. We are prioritizing testing in buildings constructed around the same time as MSB and are notifying building occupants of any presence of asbestos. We expect to complete this testing over the next two months. Extensive air sampling in MSB has shown no elevated health risk to occupants.

### **What is the university doing where the sealant is confirmed to be present?**

The University immediately implemented new procedures for work that may cause this sealant to be disturbed (e.g. drilling). As required by Ontario regulation, the University of Toronto maintains a comprehensive inventory of asbestos-containing materials in University buildings. The inventory is now being updated with the new information.

### **What should I do if I work in a building that may contain this sealant?**

As always, you should contact your property manager before doing any work, however small, including drilling, cutting, coring and minor demolition that might disturb this sealant. They will know if there are any special procedures required for your building.

### **I work in a building where the sealant was found. I was present when work was done in the past. Am I at risk?**

Available scientific literature has consistently shown that asbestos-related disease is caused by high levels of asbestos over an extended period of time. Also, asbestos is naturally in the air. So on a daily basis, all people are being exposed to small amounts of asbestos.

Should you have additional questions about your health and would like to discuss additional resources, please contact the Office of Environmental Health and Safety:  
[ehs.office@utoronto.ca](mailto:ehs.office@utoronto.ca).