

March 20, 2017

Dear Faculty, Staff and Students in MSB,

I am sending this notice as part of a commitment by the university and by Faculty of Medicine Dean Trevor Young to keep you informed of information we receive related to testing in connection to our asbestos abatement program.

Asbestos is most dangerous when it is airborne and inhaled at high exposure levels over long periods of time. No asbestos has been found in the more than a hundred daily air quality tests the university has conducted in the building since work to upgrade our laboratory space began this fall. Expanded air quality tests across the Medical Sciences Building (MSB) by a third-party environmental consultant that began earlier this month also came back negative for asbestos; air sampling will continue.

We have already communicated to you about the tests that found asbestos in dust related to the construction program and our commitment to prevent further events. I am writing you now because of an event on Friday, March 17 that we believe is not related to construction activities in MSB.

Friday morning at the request of a faculty member our staff obtained samples of dust present on a desk in one area of a room adjoining a lab (3336) on the third floor of MSB. The lab and two adjoining lab support rooms were immediately closed.

Our initial test indicated the presence of asbestos fibres and appears related to disruption of the wall surface e.g. drilling; we have yet to determine who carried out this localized work. A small quantity of asbestos was found in the paint. This is not a health hazard if left undisturbed.

To be clear, this dust appears to be a localized occurrence of asbestos contamination that has arisen from non-standard localized work. It is not believed to be connected to any prior asbestos remediation done elsewhere in MSB nor connected to any other renovation work. We will continue to investigate what happened in the earlier events

Air samples from the lab were below accepted levels consistent with all other air tests in the building to date.

These findings are a chance to underline the importance of contacting qualified staff when any work is required. The University keeps a detailed inventory of all sites where asbestos is located on our campuses, which can be accessed online with a UTORID, and we have staff and contractors with expertise in this area.

All reports related to ongoing asbestos and air quality testing in MSB are being posted by the University's Environmental Health & Safety office. Access is available by emailing your UTORID to ehs.office@utoronto.ca, with **Access request re: MSB reports portal** in the subject line. The

results also are reported to the MSB Joint Health and Safety Committee (JHSC) and will be posted on their safety board. The JHSC will continue to be engaged throughout this process.

In the coming days our EH&S staff and external experts will be available to answer questions at departmental meetings and individual sessions will be arranged for those who have particular concerns. Detailed information on asbestos is available on several government sites, such as these:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/air-quality/indoor-air-contaminants/health-risks-asbestos.html>.

<https://www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/hs/faqs/asbestos.php>

Current MSB construction is part of a major renovation under the Lab Innovation for Toronto (LIFT) project announced by the University, federal and provincial officials last summer. In preparation for that project we moved to remediate asbestos in six areas. All of that work is complete for this stage of construction.

Based on our commitment to enhance and continuously improve the manner in which construction activities proceed in MSB, the firm involved in the remediation work that led to previous positive test results in dust samples has been removed from future work at MSB and on our campus.

As we continue with this project we plan to take even further measures to ensure the safety and comfort of our occupants.

I look forward to speaking with many of you in small groups and will update you with information as it becomes available.

Kind regards,

Scott Mabury
Vice-President University Operations