

12/20/18 Email:

DEP has received emails sent to various staff members regarding the Rock Hill Quarry, in East Rockhill Township, Bucks County. The Department takes these concerns very seriously. In an effort to provide up to date, accurate information and answer as much as possible, we have compiled the most frequently asked questions below.

Moving forward, DEP will be sending regular updates on the quarry. As a recipient of this email, you have already been subscribed to receive future updates. Unless you wish to unsubscribe, there is no further action necessary at this time. We appreciate your patience.

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On December 5, 2018, DEP received notification from Hanson Aggregates PA, LLC (owner of the Rock Hill Quarry) of a positive [asbestos](#) test result from a sample of rock collected at the Quarry. DEP immediately ordered that Hanson and its contract operator, Richard E. Pierson Materials Corp., cease all mining, rock crushing, sizing, and other related activities. The cessation will remain in effect until rescinded, in writing, by DEP.

***Why is there still activity at the site, despite the cease order on “all mining activity”?***

As a result of the positive asbestos test result, DEP ordered all mining and related activities to stop. Other non-mining related activities are allowed to continue, such as construction activities on a recently approved rock crusher and general site maintenance. Additional sampling for naturally occurring asbestos is scheduled to begin on Thursday, December 20. DEP has been to the site to monitor and confirm the limited scope of activities.

***Is it a conflict of interest to have the operator responsible for testing and reporting?***

On Friday, December 14, DEP met with representatives from Hanson Aggregates and R.E. Pierson to discuss the positive asbestos test result and required additional sampling and monitoring moving forward. Much of the regulatory framework for mining activities considers operators to be responsible for testing and reporting. Nonetheless, DEP will be on site to conduct a physical assessment of the property and to ensure the adequacy all sampling, testing and monitoring, including the collection and testing of independent samples if necessary. A representative from the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA, an agency of the US Dept. of Labor) has also been contacted. The MSHA representative plans to conduct an investigation and collect independent samples if/when mining and crushing activities are reinitiated at the site.

***Can DEP address the presence of asbestos at the quarry and the associated risks?***

The presence of naturally occurring asbestos, as found in a rock sample at the Rock Hill Quarry, by itself is not an immediate health threat. DEP regulations provide the authority to address the risk of inhalation exposure by utilizing enhanced dust suppression and air monitoring requirements during earth disturbing activities, as well as limiting the extent to which asbestos-containing rock may be extracted.

***Does the rock sample result exceed an allowable limit?***

This is a question of detection limits versus reporting limits. The detection limit is the smallest amount of asbestos a lab can detect using a specific test method, which in this case is 0.10% by weight. The amount of asbestos found in the rock sample was 0.80% by weight. This means it was 8 times the smallest amount a lab can detect.

***What is being done to address mud on the street leaving the quarry?***

On December 13, 2018, the Pottsville District Mining Office (PDMO) conducted a site inspection regarding the complaint of dirt and debris on the highway. The trucks had ceased hauling and a street sweeper had been used prior to the PDMO site inspection. Additional work had been conducted on site to address the muddy areas to help eliminate the drag out issue. During the site inspection, PDMO observed dirt staining on the highway, but no deposits/clumps of mud were seen. Due to the low temperatures and possible freezing weather conditions, it appeared that no water had been used during the street sweeping process. PDMO instructed the operator to re-sweep/clean the highway since the weather conditions had improved to above-freezing temperatures. This request was made because the higher temperatures would allow the use of water to clean up the dirt staining on the highway and prevent dust from being raised during the sweeping operation. On Saturday December 15, the operator informed PDMO that workers and a street sweeper were

being utilized to clean the highway, and that both the mud/debris and staining issues were addressed. The PDMO will be conducting follow-up inspections to verify the effectiveness of the street sweeper and highway conditions. The operator has ceased transporting material from the site and PDMO is requiring the operator to submit a plan stating how dirt/debris will be prevented from being deposited on the highway.

***Is the Rock Hill Quarry likely to cause widespread health issues?***

In order for the Department to fully assess the potential risk associated with mining activities at the quarry, Hanson Aggregates must characterize the site for asbestos in the rock, satisfactorily monitor for airborne asbestos at the site, and adequately control all fugitive emissions. DEP will receive a risk evaluation from a qualified source and make a determination before allowing further mining activities at the quarry.

Please direct any questions, comments or concerns to: [RA-EPMining@pa.gov](mailto:RA-EPMining@pa.gov)