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Asbestos drives health worries

Report shows dozens of routes contain the toxic mineral

By [SHAWN LOGAN](#), SUN MEDIA

Dozens of city roads have been found to contain dangerously toxic asbestos, the Sun has learned.

And that's leading some aldermen to voice concerns over potential threats to public health during construction, as well as roads being repaved with recycled asphalt containing the now-banned mineral.

A report prepared for the city and obtained by the Sun shows that core samples taken from various points along 34 roads in March indicate more than half of those measured contain asbestos, a toxic material commonly used in roads prior to 1985.

Among the streets found to have asbestos in the asphalt were major thoroughfares such as 16 Ave. N., Blackfoot Tr. S.E. and 32 Ave. N.E., some of which have been the setting for lengthy construction projects that have raised concerns that unwary workers and citizens might be exposed to the fibrous mineral, which has been linked to severe lung disease if inhaled.

And with the city still using recycled asphalt that could contain trace elements of asbestos, even new roads might be a threat to hold the toxic substance.

Ald. Diane Colley-Urquhart, a nurse prior to joining council, said the public needs to be aware.

"Asbestos poses a significant public health problem, even in small amounts," she said.

"This causes me deep concern if we're using asbestos in any form."

Out of the 34 roads tested in the report, 21 show some levels of asbestos, many at numerous testing points.

The revelation comes the same week Toronto city officials have issued public warnings to residents in the borough of North York to avoid areas of road construction after trace levels of asbestos were found in the asphalt.

Work crews there are advising nearby residents to keep windows and doors shut during construction and police are posted at the ends of the roads, warning people not to go to their homes while the work is ongoing.

Construction crews, meanwhile, are wearing hazardous-material suits and water trucks are spraying the area to keep dust to a minimum.

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City of Calgary officials could not be reached yesterday for comment, said spokeswoman Kelsey Strachan, who noted many are on holidays.

"The city a few years ago did some tests to determine whether there was any risk to crews or the public ... and the testing they did concluded that the asbestos couldn't be released from the asphalt so there wasn't concern," she said.

"Safety is obviously a really big issue for the city and not just for crews but Calgarians as well, so we'll continue to monitor that."

But Strachan could not produce the report from the previous testing when asked for it yesterday, noting it went to administration and never to elected officials.

She added the city plans to do more testing this summer to ensure there are no threats to safety and suggested the precautions being taken in North York might be unnecessary.

"I know they're doing some more testing this summer ... just to ensure it's remaining a non-issue and to confirm that the safety of everyone's lungs is still being maintained," Strachan said.

"I can't speak for the way (Toronto does) their work, but trace amounts to them may be a different percentage, it may be higher than one percent or maybe they are being overly cautious."

She said the city does use recycled asphalt but couldn't say how the city determines if it has any asbestos levels present before it is used.

The assurances weren't enough for Ald. John Mar, who said he plans to hold administration's feet to the fire.

"We need to be concerned about the health and safety of all Calgarians -- this is scary.

"I'm going to ask these questions of administration on (July 28) to find out just what risk there is from the asbestos," he said.

AFFECTED ROADS

- 8 Ave. N.E.: 300 metres east of Edmonton Tr. N.E.; 350m west of Danloe St. N.E.
- 10 St. N.W.: 50m north of Memorial Dr. N.W.
- 11 St. S.E.: Trace amounts at 5780 11 St. S.E.; 5019 11 St. S.E.
- 16 Ave. N.W.: 75m east of 17 St. N.W.; 100m west of 16 St. N.W.
- 16 Ave. N and 43 St. N.W.: 25m east of 43 St. N.W.; 30m east of 43 St. N.W.
- 17 Ave. S.E.: 500m west of Deerfoot Tr.; 750m east of Bow River.
- 26 Ave. S.W.: 5m east of 27 St. S.W.; 5m east of 36 St. S.W.
- 32 Ave. N.E.: 100m east of 6 St. N.E.; 150m east of 6 St. N.E.; 100m east of 6 St. N.E.; 150m east of 6 St. N.E.
- 61 St. and 72 Ave. S.E.: 4116 61 Ave. S.E.; 25m east of 30 St. on 72 Ave. S.E.

- 90 Ave. S.W.: 50m east of Oakside Gate S.W.; 25m west of Palliswood Gate S.W.; 10m west of Palliser Dr. S.W.; 75m east of Oakwood Dr. S.W.; 150m east of Palliser Dr. S.W.

- Blackfoot Tr. S.E.: 300m south of Heritage Dr. S.E.; 450m north of Southland Dr. S.E.; 150m south of Highfield Rd. S.E.; 100m north of 42 Ave. S.E.; 100m north of Ogden Rd. at 26 Ave. S.E. Ramp; 100m south of Alyth Rd. S.E.

- Bonaventure Dr.: 300m north of Anderson Rd.

- Canyon Meadows Dr. S.E.: 200m east of Deer Ridge Dr. S.E.; 150m west of Deerview Dr. S.E.

- Coach Hill Rd. S.W.: No location listed.

- Elbow Dr.: 7228 Elbow Dr.

- Fairmount Dr. S.E.: 7327 Fairmount Dr. S.E.; 2427 Fairmount Dr. S.E.

- Fisher St. S.E.: 10m north of 73 Ave. S.E.

- Oakmont Rd. S.W.: 187 Oakmont Rd. S.W.

- Palliser Rd. S.W.: 300m north of Southland Dr. S.W.

- Strathcona Dr. S.W.: 25m west of Strathdale Cl. S.W.; 5m east of Strathcona Dr. S.W.; 30m west of Strathcona Dr. S.W.

- Ramp at Ogden Rd. S.E.: Ogden Rd. S.E. from Blackfoot Tr.

- Ramp at Glenmore Tr. and Macleod Tr. S.W.: eastbound ramp at Glenmore Tr. and Macleod Tr. S.W.; westbound ramp at Glenmore Tr. and Macleod Tr. S.W.

Roads found to be clear of asbestos: Spruce Meadows Tr.; Bow Bottom Tr.; Shepard Rd. S.E.; Lake Sylvan Dr. S.E.; 86 Ave. S.E.; Sifton Blvd. S.E.; Costello Blvd. and 14 Ave. S.W.; Patterson Blvd. S.W.; 33 Ave. S.W.; Ramp at Bowness Rd. and 16 Ave. N.W.; 44 Ave. N.E.; Ramp at Macleod Tr. and Glenmore Tr. S.E.; 28 St. N.E.