

# Proposed EPA asbestos ban will require water tests

By OLIVIER UYTTEBROUCK  
Reporter

The proposed Environmental Protection Agency prohibition on asbestos-cement pipe and other asbestos products will require water districts to test for asbestos fibers in drinking water, an EPA official says.

However, this requirement, which was announced last month, will probably not take effect for at least a year, says Mark McCasland, an environmental engineer in the EPA's Dallas office.

David Simmons, manager of Bryan's water and wastewater department, says asbestos-cement pipe accounts for 30 percent of Bryan's 400 miles of water mains.

Benny Luedke, College Station water and sewer department superintendent, says that asbestos-cement pipes have been in widespread use in College Station for over 30 years.

The EPA proposal sets a recommended maximum contaminant level for drinking water at 7.1 million asbestos fibers per liter,

but since this is only a recommended level, no actual testing is required yet, McCasland says.

McCasland says the proposed ban is largely in response to health risks posed to asbestos industry employees.

The proposed EPA prohibition would ban the manufacture and distribution of a number of asbestos products including asbestos-cement pipe but would allow the continued use of asbestos-cement pipe already in place as well as existing stockpiles of the pipe, McCasland says.

The EPA plans to hold public hearings to determine how quickly the prohibition will be implemented, McCasland says.

Currently, water supplies are not being tested for asbestos by the EPA, the Texas Department of Health or municipal water departments.

Concern has risen in recent years that in areas with some combination of soft, acidic and alkaline water, the inner cement lining of asbestos-cement pipe may corrode, ex-

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— David Simmons, manager of Bryan's water and wastewater department.

posing drinking water directly to asbestos and admitting asbestos fibers into the water supply.

But Texas A&M chemistry professor, Rod O'Connor, says recent tests show that water in the Bryan-College Station area tends to be slightly hard and slightly basic. He says he doubts that water in this area is corrosive.

Hard water is defined as water containing high concentrations of calcium and magnesium.

David Pullen, an engineer with the city of

College Station, says although asbestos is not specifically tested for in drinking water here, it would be apparent in the bacteriological tests performed each month by the Department of Health.

However, biologist Tom Bricker with the Department of Health in Austin says samples submitted for biological analysis are generally not observed under an electron microscope, which is necessary to detect asbestos fibers.

"Unless we were testing specifically for asbestos, we wouldn't know if and how much was there," Bricker says.

The method for analyzing water for asbestos fibers outlined in a 1980 EPA report involves filtering water through a fine membrane and observing the collected material by electron microscope at 20,000x magnification.

According to EPA studies, asbestos also can be released into the water supply when

asbestos-cement pipes are broken or into.

Simmons says that ground moisture due to moisture in the soil often will cause asbestos-cement pipe to snap.

McCasland says the greatest release of asbestos into drinking water occurs when pipes and taps are made into new or existing lines.

Concentrations of asbestos 10 times higher than normal have persisted in drinking water for weeks after taps have been made in asbestos-cement pipe, according to one EPA study.

McCasland says that usually after a pipe is made in asbestos-cement pipe, the water is flushed out several times before it enters the lines that supply the public.

In College Station, pipes are flushed after taps are made to prevent material from being clogged, Luedke says. However, government agencies monitor how much is made, he says.

## Contributor names to be on Capitol monument

AUSTIN — Texas House Speaker Gib Lewis on Tuesday helped unveil a miniature of the \$2 million Sesquicentennial monument that will be placed on the Capitol ground.

The 20-ton bronze monument is 37 feet long, 17 feet high and is titled "Texas Legacy." It was commissioned by the 1985 Legislature but will be paid for by a fund drive sponsored by the Texas Historical Foundation along with the American Masters Foundation of Houston.

The monument depicts two cowboys on horseback herding five Longhorn steers and a heifer across a section of railroad track.

All contributors of \$25,000 or more will have their names engraved on the base of the monument.

In addition, Lurie said, anyone contributing \$25,000 or more will be eligible for a drawing and the winner's likeness, or anyone he chooses if they are male, will be used for one of the two cowboy faces.

## New child restraint law deemed successful

By KAREN BOEHNKE  
Reporter

Twenty infants have been saved from death in car accidents since the Texas Child Passenger Safety Law went into effect last year, according to statistics from the Texas Department of Health.

The law requires that children under 2 ride in approved safety seats and that children from 2 to 4 be in safety seats or seat belts.

During a nine-month period in 1984, 63 children aged 4 and under were killed in wrecks. Last year the count was 43, a 31 percent decrease.

Of that 43, only five were in safety seats, said Carolyn Evans, coordina-

tor of the Safe Riders Program at the Texas Department of Health.

Evans said the decline wasn't a surprise.

"Other states that had the law before Texas saw similar decreases," Evans said. "What is really striking about the statistics is that not only are we seeing a decline in deaths, we are proving a major reason for that decline is the use of safety seats."

Evans said traffic accidents are the number one cause of death for children under 4.

According to the department, as many as 90 percent of deaths and 85 percent of injuries to children in ac-

cidents could be prevented if restraints were used.

Sgt. Choya Wallen of the Bryan Police Department said many parents aren't using the seats properly.

Often parents will put their children in safety seats but not strap them with seat belts, she said. This is not only against the law but dangerous, she said.

Anita Pitt, coordinator of the Community Occupant Protection Program for the Brazos Valley Development Council, said parents who don't comply with the law generally do so mainly out of habit.

To combat this neglect, the program tries to educate the public

through demonstrations of use, Pitt said.

A violation of the law may result in a \$25-\$50 fine for first offense. The fine may be refunded if the violator shows proof of getting a new seat within 10 days.

Wallen said that five citations were issued locally in January. One was dismissed because the violator bought a safety seat.

The law is not strict as other states. For example, New Mexico law requires all persons age 11 to use a seat belt or seat.

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