ENVIRONMENTAL TIMES

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New Facility Update!



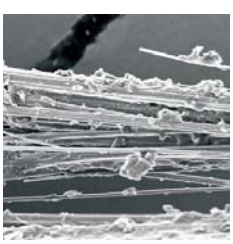

Progress is well under way at AGAT's new 12th Street location. As one looks west to a beautiful view of the Rockies and Calgary skyline from the many windows adorning the second floor you can't help wonder how spectacular this addition to the AGAT story this building will be. The administration portion of the building is nearing completions with just flooring left to be completed. The main boardroom, Accounting, and IT offices are complete. The next phase of construction is the lab itself with brand new Mott benching expected in the next few weeks. Following bench installation is the arrival of new instruments.

Excitement is building within AGAT as the transformation begins to take shape. New air exchange and utilities have been planned and will be installed shortly as to meet the particular needs of the environmental lab. As we near completion, clients will be well informed as to sample drop off information and when they can expect samples to start being processed on the new instruments at the 12th street location. Grand Opening plans are well under way, as several political dignitaries have already committed to attending the event. We will be sure to keep everyone informed as to date and time of the Grande Opening, a true milestone in the history of AGAT and the environmental industry in Western Canada.




Asbestos: Continuing Challenge

Can you imagine blankets were once made from asbestos? Asbestos mining began in the 1800's, and continues today. Over 50,000 different products, ranging from swimming pool bases to stucco, contain or have contained asbestos. Since people are unaware of its dangers, uncontrolled use continues. Therefore, asbestos-related deaths continue to rise. Nearly everyone becomes exposed to asbestos at least once in his or her life. Those exposed to asbestos on a regular basis are more likely to become ill, however asbestos-related diseases have been found in those who have had only brief exposures.



Asbestos made into a finished product such as floor tiles pose little health risk, but any small disturbance can cause fibers to become airborne. Friability is when the mineral dust or fibers are released into the air, causing asbestos to be easily swallowed or inhaled. Renovating, scraping, crumbling, rubbing, sandpapering, maintenance, or damages such as rips, cracks, or frays allow asbestos to become friable. For example, moving a box in your asbestos-contaminated attic can cause friability of asbestos fibers.

Zonolite, by its trademark name, is one type of attic insulation that contains a deadly type of asbestos found to be very friable. In fact, most of the world market was supplied with this asbestos containing attic insulation, over

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one billion tons being shipped to Canada alone. The Calgary Board of Education used mass amounts of Zonolite. The insulation is made from vermiculite, a group of minerals mined for its heat resistant, chemically inert, high insulating value, and absorbency. Vermiculite is a brownish, pink layered substance that, when heated, pops and expands in volume. Any vermiculite containing materials can be made with deadly tremolite-actinolite asbestos, including gardening materials. It is extremely health hazardous to have vermiculite in any public building, home, or school. This is only one type of asbestos to be concerned about. For example, mines across Canada produced a total of 61 millions tons of chrysotile, another deadly asbestos, between 1900 and 2000.

Those exposed will not see signs of illness until 10-40 years after the first exposure. Diseases include asbestosis, lung cancer, tumors, cancers of the larynx, gastrointestinal tract, and mesothelamia. Asbestiosis is a common asbestos-related chronic lung disease that produces gasping and shortness of breath, irregular cough patterns and permanent lung damage. Mesothelamia is a more rare type of disease, where death is imminent. Asbestos related diseases require oxygen tanks, chemotherapy, and many other medical expenses. Hundreds of thousands of dollars is the cost to care for a patient. Strict regulations have begun and must continue to be enforced to reduce the number of people infected.

Public awareness and education on the hazards of asbestos is just beginning. "People must become educated on the dangers of asbestos. Since they are unaware, the proper safety precautions are not being followed", says Pokolinski. If you suspect past exposure, inform your physician who can detect asbestos in urine, feces, mucus, or via X-Ray. You may also consider consulting a lung disease specialist or pneumonologist.

If you suspect an asbestos hazard, get your suspect samples tested. Based on the results, you must make a decision to seal or remove the asbestos source in order prevent contamination. AGAT Laboratories qualified employees use Polarized Light Microscopy to identify asbestos types and percentage. Pokolinski states, "We routinely test an increasing amount of vermiculite samples found to contain tremolite-actinolite asbestos. This is not to mention the large amount of samples containing the other types of asbestos." Submit your suspect sample to AGAT Laboratories with requested turn around time. We are CAEAL and AIHA accredited and having successfully completed intense asbestos training and received a certificate through MICA (Microscopy Instruction, Consultation, and Analysis). That, coupled with decades of testing, makes our results more than trustworthy. Don't leave yourself wondering.

AGAT Announces New Inorganic Supervisor

AGAT Laboratories is pleased to announce the appointment of Shirley Graham to the position of Inorganics Supervisor with a focus on soil quality. Shirley brings a wealth of technical expertise and knowledge to the Environmental team that she has gained in nearly thirty years of experience as an environmental practitioner. Shirley obtained both her B.Sc. in MicroBiology

and her M.Sc. in Soil Chemistry Physics at the University of Alberta. Shirley has also obtained her P.Ag., and is a Certified Crop Advisor. She began her career with Alberta Environment in Edmonton, and filled several positions over her ten-year tenure. Following that she spent ten years with the Lethbridge Research Centre. In her role as Supervisor in the Service Lab Shirley oversaw a wide range of unique analysis, often having to develop specific methodologies for new analysis. Most recently, Shirley spent seven years with Norwest Labs, four as the Assistant Manager of the Lethbridge facility, and the last three as their Agricultural Division Quality Officer. Shirley is grateful for the seamless transition to AGAT Laboratories, and is excited about the opportunity to join the Environmental team.

Shirley's immediate focus is placed upon streamlining laboratory procedures, with a heavy emphasis on quality control. Her goal is to make it as easy as possible for staff to be in compliance with existing regulations. Additionally, Shirley is working hand in hand with administration preparing for the opening of AGAT's new environmental facility. She is excited by the challenges and opportunity presented with the creation of a whole new lab. Previously, she has helped to renovate and expand older labs, and notes it is important that the new facility look good, while functioning as efficiently as possible. One of the key challenges that Shirley faces is getting to know her staff quickly, along with their diverse strengths, in order to determine how to best function as a unit moving forward. Shirley's wealth of experience and industry knowledge is a great addition to AGAT Laboratories and the company is proud to have added one of the top soil scientists in the industry to the Environmental Division