

Library 1990

Asbestos spill plagues library

SANTA CRUZ — Asbestos clean-up specialists were at the downtown library Wednesday afternoon to figure out what to do about a section of ceiling that fell when a pipe burst over the weekend and sprayed it with water.

The section was part of the ceiling over the kitchen next to a meeting room, and the area has been closed since the problem was discovered Monday morning because of the chance asbestos particles have been released.

Asbestos, a widely used mineral in such products as brake linings and building materials that causes lung cancer and other serious disease, was the subject of a gradual ban imposed by the Environmental Protection Agency in 1989.

Like most other buildings that went up in the 1960s, the downtown Santa Cruz library has asbestos in its fire-proofing materials,

insulation and heating ducts.

"Overall, the library is safe," said Michael Dwan, operations manager of Dwan Associates, which is the library's asbestos consultant. "But there is a potential for asbestos fiber release depending on the situation."

The problem of using asbestos became all too apparent in the aftermath of the 1989 earthquake, which shook the library and caused dangerous particles to rain down.

This spring, the library was closed for four weeks to take care of the two areas where exposed asbestos was found. One of those was the meeting room, and a special sealant was sprayed to encapsulate the asbestos.

The other was in the second-floor storage collection area, where most of the \$83,000 was spent to scrape off exposed asbestos and

cart it away. In addition, the whole library was vacuumed in a special process to collect any stray particles.

In the kitchen off the meeting room, said Turner, the rush of water from the pipe that burst in the cold over the weekend caused a six-square-foot section of the encapsulated asbestos to drop to the floor.

Coastwide Environmental Technologies of Watsonville sent a team to the library Wednesday to study the problem and decide how to dispose of the section and make the area safe again.

Until then, said Dick Lange, supervisor of the city's building maintenance department, no one has been allowed in the area.

Lange said the section of asbestos-laden ceiling fell because the water soaked in and made it so heavy it dropped.

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