

District plans oil tank, asbestos removal

By Darrell Clem
staff writer

Under an ever-tightening grip from the federal government, the Walled Lake Board of Education has appointed an environmental specialist to plan for the removal of underground oil tanks and asbestos from school property. The district includes northwest Farmington Hills.

Although the oil tanks and asbestos apparently pose no immediate health risks in the Walled Lake district, officials assigned Central High School building foreman Mike Hughes to investigate environmental matters.

The new position was created for a six-month period; decisions about whether it will become a permanent post will be made later.

Linda Moskalik, assistant superintendent for finances, said the friable, or crumbling, airborne type of asbestos linked to serious lung disease already has been removed from Walled Lake schools. Schools nationwide removed hazardous asbestos in the early '80s as part of a federal mandate.

But federal officials now require school districts to remove the less hazardous, or non-friable, asbestos when such projects as the replacement of floor tiles or pipes are launched. Friable asbestos that may have been undetected in the initial removal phase also must be removed.

HUGHES WILL develop a master plan for environmental projects,

ordinate the bidding process, monitor the removal of asbestos and oil tanks, provide training for school staff, ensure that water inspections are made and keep detailed records, among other duties.

Moskalik said the Walled Lake district, like others nationwide, "had so many government regulations that we had to comply with, and we wanted to organize all the work that we had to do."

It prompted Hughes' appointment as environmental specialist. She said much of the work normally would be conducted by Charles Kis-sawire, director of operations, but he has been swamped by work resulting from school construction projects.

Meanwhile, Moskalik stressed the fact that there is no evidence that the oil tanks or asbestos pose any health hazards. She said there are only the known underground oil tanks that formerly were used to heat schools, "and they're empty now."

FOREVER, the asbestos — as commonly used as insulation — is contained in such areas as floor tiles and around pipes, and federal officials have not demanded immediate removal of the non-friable type. Instead, it must be removed as such projects are begun. A case in point: Asbestos was removed this year from Twin Beach Elementary School when boilers were replaced.

Under federal mandate, school districts nationwide had to beat an Oct. 12, 1988 deadline for reinspection of all schools for asbestos. Those

projects had to be completed by an outside, independent consultant. As a followup every six months,

however, school districts may choose to conduct internal inspections by trained employees, such as Hughes.


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