

# Environmental Issues in Construction

## 2017



## Maintaining the Highest Environmental Standards

The New York City School Construction Authority (SCA) is committed to ensuring public school buildings provide a safe learning environment for students. The SCA's Industrial & Environmental Hygiene (IEH) Division works very closely with the SCA's Architecture & Engineering (A&E) and Construction Management (CM) departments to provide guidance, management, and oversight related to environmental studies, investigations and remediation during construction and in existing schools.



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## SCA's Asbestos Abatement During School Construction

**SCA performs extensive studies and investigations to determine the environmental conditions of every school site. This analysis goes well beyond requirements of typical industry practices since SCA is charged with constructing schools that are environmentally safe. SCA designs and implements comprehensive remedial measures to ensure a safe environment for the life of the school. Our level of care is what sets SCA apart from others.**

- The SCA never performs asbestos removal, lead paint removal or any other high-risk work in occupied school buildings.
- Abatement is performed under NYC Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) regulations, permits, and oversight.
- An independent environmental consultant and SCA's Industrial Hygienists monitor the abatement activities.
- During asbestos abatement, an independent environmental consultant provides project monitoring which includes air monitoring during and end-of-project air clearance with visual inspection.
- Environmental experts verify that asbestos, lead and other hazardous materials have been removed and that school areas are safe.
- After analysis of post-abatement air monitoring samples indicate final air clearance has been achieved, a re-occupancy letter is issued by SCA's environmental consultant to the school after the successful completion of abatement.



## SCA's Lead-Based Paint Policy During Construction

**It is SCA's policy to assume all interior painted surfaces are coated with lead-based paint. All work that disturbs painted surfaces must comply with USEPA and OSHA lead-based paint requirements.**

- Dust control precautions are used to prevent possible spread of dust and reduce worker exposure during construction.
- SCA standard construction specifications require the installation of dust barriers prior to the start of construction activities, daily cleanup, including wet mopping, wet wiping and HEPA vacuuming.
- SCA environmental consultants utilizing EPA and DEP certified personnel perform wipe sampling at the end of construction.
- A re-occupancy letter is issued by SCA's environmental consultant to the school indicating that wipe sampling has been achieved at the successful completion of every wipe sampling.





## Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs)

Currently the City of New York and the SCA, in agreement with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, is undertaking a PCB Pilot Program (Pilot) focused on addressing PCBs in NYC public schools. The Pilot includes replacement of all PCB-containing lighting fixtures by the end of 2016 calendar year with energy efficient fluorescent lights. Additionally, include under the Pilot is a comprehensive study evaluating the possible presence of PCBs in other building materials, and potential remedial alternatives. For the PCB Pilot documents, see the SCA website at bottom of this page.



PCBs were added to caulk and elastic sealant materials, particularly from 1950-1977. When caulk with PCBs is disturbed, it may produce dust that contains PCBs. The SCA has developed and implemented stringent dust control practices to minimize the potential exposure to PCB-containing dust during construction.

All caulking is tested for PCBs if it will be disturbed during construction.

SCA employs the same dust control measures for PCBs as is used for lead dust control. The protocols require rigorous dust control measures during the work, followed by cleaning and inspection at the conclusion of every work shift.

After completion of renovation or demolition that involves the disturbance of exterior PCB caulking material, soil adjacent to the school building is sampled, by a qualified environmental professional to test for the presence of PCBs and remediated if required.

For more information on our PCB Program, for caulk and light ballast replacement please visit:

**[nycsca.org/Community/Programs/EPA-NYC-PCB/Pages/default.aspx](http://nycsca.org/Community/Programs/EPA-NYC-PCB/Pages/default.aspx)**

# Mold Remediation in Schools During Construction

Mold is a form of fungi and is present almost everywhere in outdoor and indoor environments. Indoors, mold growth is encouraged by warm and humid conditions. Mold needs moisture to grow and becomes a problem only where there is water damage, high humidity, or dampness.



The SCA's environmental consultants assess potential mold growth, water damage, or musty odors in the school. Equipment is employed to view spaces in ductwork or behind walls, as well as to measure moisture in building materials that may encourage mold growth.

These consultants conduct a comprehensive field survey of the suspected area and provide a detailed inventory of all effected material.

Remedial measures are recommended as needed. These recommendations typically include; thorough cleanup, drying, and/or removal of water damaged material. In all instances, any source of water must be fully investigated and remediated.

Upon satisfactory completion of the work and final inspection, SCA's Industrial Hygienist issues written notification to school administration that the space is suitable for re-occupancy.

*If you have any questions about environmental issues during construction, please email [ercmailbox@nycsca.org](mailto:ercmailbox@nycsca.org)*