



The Online Division of The Sacramento Bee

This story is taken from [El Dorado](#) at sacbee.com.

---

## El Dorado asbestos rules OK'd

### Contractors and residents criticize anti-dust measures.

**By Cathy Locke -- Bee Staff Writer**

**Published 2:15 am PDT Saturday, July 23, 2005**

Construction projects in El Dorado County will be subject to more stringent dust-control measures under rules adopted by the county's Air Quality Management District board.

The measures were crafted to reduce risks emanating from naturally occurring asbestos. However, while some residents argued that the rules fall short in protecting public health, contractors warned that the measures will financially damage businesses and county government.

"Be prepared to open your wallets," contractor Doug Veerkamp told the county Board of Supervisors, acting as the air quality board last week.

Jon Morgan, the county's environmental management director characterized the issue as "a fragile balance."

The rules apply to projects as small as residential swimming pools involving excavation of as little as 20 cubic yards of soil.

The Board of Supervisors, acting as the air quality board, adopted the rules this week and described the measures as a work in progress, adding that they will be updated to reflect evolving science.

"We're trying to get something in place," said board Chairman Charlie Paine. "Otherwise, we have this huge document and we're going nowhere."

County staff members Tuesday said revisions had been made in response to concerns raised during a June 28 hearing. Construction industry representatives had questioned test methods to determine soil moisture content. Carolyn Craig, air quality district engineer, said staffers concluded that the criteria could be met by eliminating visible dust at a project site.

Placerville resident Alice Howard argued, however, that asbestos fibers can be present without visible dust. She also criticized the decision to reduce the buffer zones in which the rules apply - from a half-mile zone to land within a quarter-mile of areas expected or found to contain naturally occurring asbestos. She said it appeared that members of SAGE - Surveyors, Architects, Geologists and Engineers - had influenced the decision to reduce the buffers. "But they aren't experts in public health," Howard said.

El Dorado Hills resident Chris Anaya said the test methods specified are not "state of the art." More-sensitive tests that use electron microscopes to detect asbestos fibers should be used at least for soils in critical areas such as school sites, he argued. Anaya also said county maps identifying areas of naturally occurring asbestos do not show some known "hot spots."

Morgan said the maps were prepared by the state Department of Conservation in 2001-02 and were overlaid on county parcel maps. Some sites might be missing, he said, but the maps will be updated as new locations are discovered.

Knowing precisely where asbestos will be found is difficult. But Supervisor Jack Sweeney said, "If you find it when you start digging at a location, you stop, and you've got to do something about it. That's down to shovel-specific accuracy."

Art Marinaccio of Shingle Springs opposed provisions restricting rock-crushing activities, arguing that it could be construed as prohibiting such operations at quarries in designated aggregate resource areas. "I know some attorney is going to bring it up," he said.

Marcella McTaggart, air pollution control officer, said the rule applies only to construction and construction-related activities.

Sweeney said, "If a quarry has a permit for crushing, that's OK."

The more stringent measures are expected to boost costs for public and private construction projects. Kris Payne of the county Transportation Department said more efficient street sweepers might be required to handle dirt that vehicles and heavy equipment track out from construction sites.

Asked whether the department had studied how the new measures might affect the cost of construction jobs, Payne said uncertainty about the changes has been reflected in higher bids.

Contractor Veerkamp said contractors are reluctant to bid on construction jobs in the county. Two recent Department of Transportation projects drew only one bid each, and both came in over the engineer's estimate, he said. He predicted the increased costs will be "in the millions."

Air quality officials will monitor the effects of the new rules and report to the board in mid-October. The goal, Morgan said, is not to overregulate or underregulate. "We'll see where it lands," he said.

---

## Addressing asbestos

Conditions of a new El Dorado County Air Quality Management District regulation to address construction dust and reduce hazards from naturally occurring asbestos:

- Applies to earth work and construction projects involving more than 20 cubic yards of soil and within a quarter-mile of areas expected or found to contain naturally occurring asbestos.
- Prohibits construction-generated dust plumes that exceed 25 feet or cross the project boundary.
- Requires documentation for on-site disposal of excavated soils.
- Requires testing and documentation for off-site disposal of excavated soils.
- Requires asbestos warning signs at the project entry point.

Source: El Dorado County Air Quality Management District

## Related link:

- [Ongoing asbestos coverage](#)

## About the writer:

- The Bee's Cathy Locke can be reached at (916) 608-7451 or [clocke@sacbee.com](mailto:clocke@sacbee.com).

Go to: [Sacbee](#) / [Back to story](#)

---

This article is protected by copyright and should not be printed or distributed for anything except personal use.  
The Sacramento Bee, 2100 Q St., P.O. Box 15779, Sacramento, CA 95852  
Phone: (916) 321-1000

[Copyright © The Sacramento Bee](#)