



# FACT SHEET

Mountain Home Air Force Base, Idaho



## Asbestos Area near Housing

The asbestos area near housing is a 70-acre solid-waste disposal area located on the eastern boundary of Mountain Home AFB. It began receiving waste materials and construction debris in the early 1950s.

In 2014, materials that contain asbestos were discovered in the area. Because of its proximity to base housing, the area was fenced to prevent access. The Air Force began a more detailed investigation of the area to determine what materials were present, how much was there, where they were located and if they posed a health risk to those living and working nearby.

The investigation found quantities of asbestos containing material (ACM) in the area. The vast majority of it was concentrated into trenches, but other ACM was found scattered across the vicinity

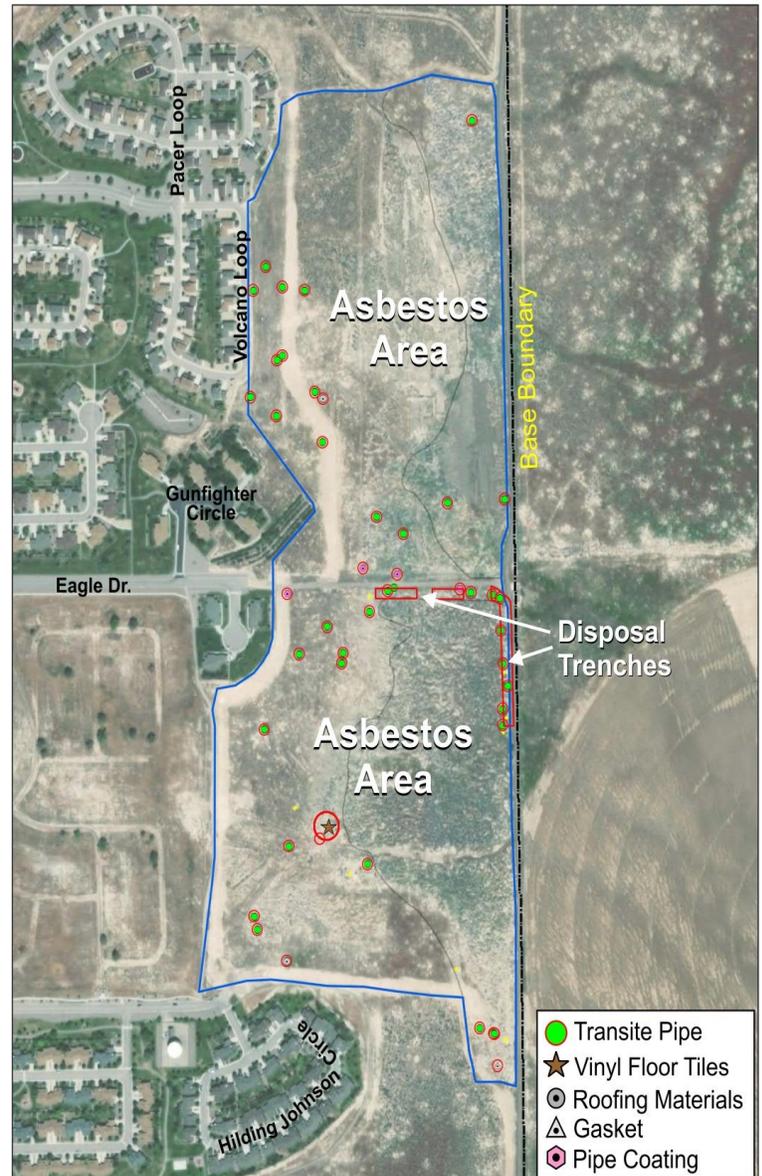
### What is asbestos?

Asbestos is generic term applied to a number a naturally occurring minerals comprised of microscopic fibers. Asbestos first became popular during the industrial revolution. It was relatively cheap, easy to obtain and was extremely useful as a construction material. Asbestos does not burn, is not chemically reactive and is extremely strong, so it was highly desirable as a construction material and in any application that would benefit from its heat-resistant properties. Its popularity peaked in the early to mid-1900s. Most buildings constructed prior to 1980 likely contain ACM in some form.

### Is anyone in danger?

Currently, all the ACM in the area is intact, and as long as it remains intact, the asbestos is not dangerous. The danger occurs when asbestos fibers become friable—meaning the fibers separate from the ACM and get into the air. This happens when the ACM deteriorates or is damaged, releasing the fibers to the air. If airborne fibers are inhaled, they could potentially damage lung tissue.

The Air Force is currently working with U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality on appropriate cleanup actions to prevent the ACM from deteriorating to a point that it would become a hazard. Once the Air Force and the regulators have agreed on



a plan, it will be presented to the public for comment. In the meantime, the Air Force will continue monitoring to ensure no hazardous levels of asbestos fibers are found.

It's important that no unauthorized people enter the asbestos area. Doing so could damage the ACM, causing the asbestos fibers to be released into the air.

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