

# **Cleveland County Schools are Unsafe for Children!! First, there was MOLD issues that never got fixed!!! NOW-ASBESTOS!!! As usual the School Board is Clueless, even dangerous!! On what to do. Or NOT to do!!! Report and conclusions by Robert A, Williams**

**Editor's Note: If you or your children or grandchildren have ever attended a school in Cleveland County, It is recommended that you read this article to the very end. And act accordingly!!!**

Folks, If YOU have paid any attention at all, you would realize that Cleveland County Schools are mostly an old assortment of 29 school buildings, as well as the Central Offices, that are the leftovers from pre-merger times. Of those 30 buildings, only two that I know of-North Shelby School and the new Shelby Middle School-have been built in the past 10 years. Many, like all four high schools, are well over 50 years old and did not include air conditioning in the original design and construction. Even today, this very minute, CCS has no strategic plans for the modernization or replacement of any school due to obsolescence or changing student demographics and changing population distribution over

the county. There are reasons for that-bad reasons-that will not be discussed in this article. This article will be devoted 100% to the health hazards of our students and teachers associated with just attending and working at CCS School facilities.

Over the years CCS facilities have been air-conditioned. Part of the air-conditioning process includes humidity control. Hot and humid air is cooled and moisture is removed and drained away. Everybody that has poured themselves a glass of Iced-tea has observed that the cold outside surfaces of the tea glass, especially in the summer months, causes moisture to form on the outside of the glass that will drain off the glass and cause water spots on your furniture. Without discussion the thermodynamics of this phenomenon, air-conditioning uses that same process to remove excess "humidity" from the air circulated within the building. Then this "condensate" water is drained away to an outside drain and carried safely away.

The problem arises when these condensate drain lines within the building, as well as the chilled water piping or cold refrigerant piping within the building are not properly insulated, or the insulation is damaged. The condensate that forms on the uninsulated piping surfaces and drips off inside the building. Usually onto the ceiling tiles installed in the classrooms and office areas. The ceiling tiles get soaking wet and provide a perfect environment for growing mold. Mold spores are released in the building and contaminate the air that is being recirculated within the building.

These are well understood processes to people who understand how air-conditioning equipment and processes work. These people also understand that there are cheap and easy fixes to the dripping water from cold and uninsulated piping. Insulate the piping with a continuous and undamaged insulation installation. Inspect and repair damaged or missing piping insulation when and where it is found. If the condensate drain piping itself has a leak, fix that too. Also, change air

conditioning air filters on a regular basis to ensure the proper air flow is being passed through heat exchange surfaces. Typically, on a monthly basis. Never more than three months without a filter change. Same with home air conditioning equipment.

Yet, for such a well understood process as installing and operating a functioning air conditioning systems, situations have been found at Burns and Crest High Schools where water drips on to ceiling tile surfaces to the point that the resulting mold infestation has actually overwhelmed the ability to safely habitate certain rooms and areas within the schools. Air Filters have been reported to me that had not been changed for up to four years. That is right-YEARS!!!. FOUR YEARS without changing the air filters. Only fools would allow such conditions to develop.

And, what does the CCS Administration propose to do to fix these easy to fix problems. They want to tear out all the old air conditioning equipment and replace the system with NEW HVAC equipment at a cost that might be \$Millions.

I have said all of this as a background to say this. The CONTINUED mold infestation at Burns and Crest High Schools is NOT an equipment problem. It is a PEOPLE problem. A Management problem. A management ORGANIZATION problem. And THE problem is incompetence, plain and simple incompetence. INCOMPETENSE at the highest levels at CCS.

It goes like this. As management functions at Cleveland County Schools are presently arranged, a maintenance or operational problem is discovered at the ground level and reported to the "Chain of Command" within the Maintenance and Operations Departments. These ground level folks that actually perform the maintenance and operate the equipment usually know what they are doing. And, when there is a problem, they report it.

There are several layers of supervision in the Maintenance and

Operations Department that these problems are reported to. These “supervisors” usually also know what they are doing and report to the Maintenance and Operations Department “Manager” who reports the problems to the CCS “Assistant Superintendent” over Maintenance and Operations who then reports the problems to the CCS Superintendent, who then reports to the CCS School Board. A typical organization for a state and county run “bureaucracy.”

In this case, as is the case with most state and county bureaucracies, the management organization is “top-heavy” and the top administrators are totally ignorant (which makes them incompetent) of the problems and the solutions and are just interested in protecting their career advancement and pay grades. And most likely got into their positions because of family ties and who they play golf with. Or, go to Church with as this seems to be the Case at CCS.

In regard to the mold infestation at Burns and Crest High Schools, it’s “management gone wild” at every level. The School Board, old or new, with the exception of Danny Blanton have not the least idea of industrial HVAC equipment and how it should be maintained and operated. And they refuse to listen to those that do. CCS Superintendent Dr. Stephen Fisher is totally clueless in the workings (prioritizing work, planning and the execution) of school maintenance and operations. Fisher’s background is teacher, principal, bureaucratic administration paper pushing and covering-up for bad decisions and illegal acts of the old School Board and administration. (And now the new School Board.) Fisher was promoted to Superintendent to continue the cover-up activities.

Assistant Superintendent Jennifer Wampler was recently promoted to manage (badly manage) the Maintenance and Operations functions at CCS along with the HR Department. Wampler’s closest association with the technical parts of Maintenance and facility Operations comes from her experience

as a classroom Chemistry teacher. Wampler's other experience at CCS is teacher and principal and HR Department where she has provided exceptional performance in covering up sex crimes between students and teachers (and principals and teachers), school credit card (P-card) fraud and hiring friends and family members of certain school board members.

Maintenance and Operations Manager Steve Boheler has a work history in industrial construction and most likely has the best understanding of Maintenance and school operation as any of those previously noted. However, it is believed that Mr. Boheler was disappointed with the incompetent promotion of Jennifer Wampler to the Assistant Superintendent position over Maintenance and facility Operations, instead of him. Boheler has been brought to school board meetings and then held behind closed doors in reserve if Fisher and Wampler could not BS their way through simple (simple if you knew the technical subject matter) questions by School Board member Danny Blanton. Without fail, when Blanton's questions are too much to the point and beyond the competence of Wampler and Fisher, the School Board, old and new, have then acted to shut down Danny Blanton from discovering the truth of the matter. Sources report that Boheler's disappointment at CCS has manifested itself into Boheler taking on a second job selling real estate. Perhaps planning an escape mechanism for the time, he fully gets tired of the CCS Bull Shit and moves on to more pleasant and rewarding activities. Perhaps that point has already been reached as it appears that Mr. Boheler has been "off" the job for a while for unknown reasons and the New School Board is searching for technically qualified firms to inspect and access school facilities in order to develop a long overdue "strategic plan."

Now folks, all that discussion pertains to the Mold issue and the root causes of this Mold caused health related hazard. The rest of this article is about something that totally overshadows Mold as a health hazard at CCS. The newest and

most serious problem is ASBESTOS!!!

The use of Asbestos dates back to:

2,400 BC. 4,500 years ago, near a lake in Finland, evidence showed the people living there used asbestos in making cooking pots and utensils.

Around 2,600 years later in ancient Rome. A Roman Scholar, Pliny the Elder, writes that the slaves who mined and worked with asbestos became ill. For reasons unknown.

In 1858 the Johns Company began mining a fibrous form of asbestos for use in insulation. The Industrial Revolution saw a marked increase in asbestos production and use.

In 1874 commercial mining of asbestos began in Quebec Canada.

In 1918 the US Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that there was an abnormally high risk of early deaths among asbestos workers,

In 1930 a disease, Asbestosis, was identified by Dr E.R.A. Merriweather. One of four asbestos workers would suffer from asbestosis. Merriweather further concluded:

1. That asbestosis was a disease of latency, i.e. that workers [exposed to asbestos](#) would NOT show signs of injury for many years;
2. That asbestos dust had to be controlled through ventilation and the use of respirators.
3. That workers exposed to asbestos should be informed and warned in order to assure a "sane appreciation of the risk."
4. That the finished products created dust that should be controlled and minimized.

Note: Dr. Merewether's medical description of asbestos disease mirrors exactly the description of the disease today. His recommendations, if fully implemented by the asbestos industry, would have saved tens of thousands of lives and injuries to American workers since 1930.

In the 1930s The UK instituted Regulations on asbestos factories. However, these regulations did not apply to workers in other industries who installed or handled asbestos as part

of their job.

In 1933 Asbestosis was first reported in the United States, though it is speculated that the disease had simply been misdiagnosed as tuberculosis or other pulmonary diseases before then. **The Metropolitan Life Insurance Co. found asbestosis in 29 percent of workers in a Johns-Manville asbestos factory, leading to settlements in lawsuits filed by 11 sick employees.**

In 1934 a link Between Workplace Asbestos Exposure and Cancer was discovered. Researchers report cases of asbestosis and lung cancer in an asbestos factory. Many of the workers had less than six months of exposure to asbestos. Reports were also published of asbestosis from workplace exposure to products, including boiler workers, custodians and insulators. In 1942 there were Warnings of Cancer Risk from Asbestos Exposure. Researchers report that lung cancer in building trades workers is likely caused by asbestos. Dr. W.C. Heuper, a noted occupational physician and the first chief of the environmental cancer section of the National Cancer Institute, suggests that asbestos causes Asbestosis as well as cancer in the manufacturing process as well as through finished building products such as insulation and packing materials. In 1949, Dr. Heuper warns that asbestos was a cancer risk to the general population. By this time there were over 200 references in the widely available literature regarding asbestos and disease.

In 1943 the first Mesothelioma-Like Tumor Reported. The first case of a mesothelioma-like tumor is reported by Dr. Welder in a German study.

In 1947, I was born. Also, more Links Between Asbestosis and Lung Cancer were established. Also, Dr. Merewether finds that 13% of asbestosis cases also had cancer of the lungs or pleura.

In 1948 the Encyclopedia Britannica lists asbestos as a recognized cause of occupational and environmental cancer. The Journal of the American Medical Association concludes that asbestosis is probably linked to occupational cancer.

In 1953 I started school at Fallston School. Mesothelioma is reported in an asbestos worker.

In 1955 it was determined that asbestos workers have a 10-fold risk above the general population of contracting lung cancer.

In 1960 the link between Asbestos exposure and Mesothelioma was strengthened. This study also found that children and wives of asbestos workers were at risk as the asbestos fibers at work could be carried home on the clothes of workers.

In the 1960s the Asbestos Industry ignores warnings of the asbestos health risks. The medical literature continued to identify asbestos as a major carcinogen and environmental hazard, with over 200 publications describing the hazards of asbestos by the end of the 1960s. Notwithstanding this knowledge, and the many deaths that resulted from breathing in the dust from these products, the manufacturers and installers of these materials continued to sell and install asbestos products without warning workers, reducing the dust or substituting equally effective materials in place of the asbestos. Tragically, many companies had secured additional knowledge regarding the connection between asbestos and cancer as early as the 1930s. **Instead of protecting the public, these companies chose profit over the health of citizens and altered research reports to hide these findings from the public.**

**From the 1940s through 1989 the use of cheap asbestos applications skyrocketed in construction materials; pipe, kiln and refractory insulation, paint, automobile parts etc. It is estimated that every home, building, school, and other structures intended for human habitation that were constructed in this time frame used some component containing asbestos.**

In 1989 the US EPA attempted to phase out asbestos use in almost all products in the USA.

In 1991, under pressure from asbestos industry lobbyists, US Courts overturns the EPA's ban on the use of asbestos and products using asbestos. Asbestos substances can still be found in dozens of products manufactured today.

2021-Later lawsuits against the asbestos industry has resulted



in multi-billion-dollar awards that have bankrupted the asbestos industry. Today and everyday now, commercials from lawyers are aired seeking those exposed to asbestos to come forward for a piece of the asbestos multi-billion-dollar trust fund class action awards.

It should be noted here that asbestos abatement in buildings have progressively gotten more and more expensive. Wise property owners in Cleveland County and elsewhere have often chosen to demolish houses and building that contain asbestos before the cost of remediation increases even more. But Not the nitwits running Cleveland County Schools.

At the April 12th 2021 School Board meeting the school board voted unanimously to approve a sole-source contract with a Charlotte firm to spray **"Rhino-Shield"** over some damaged asbestos bearing materials at North Elementary School to "encapsulate" the asbestos. School Board Chairman Robert "Luke" Queen recommended the Rhino-Shield application because it was "cheaper" than removing the damaged asbestos materials.

Clearly Luke Queen, the other school board members and the incompetent Jennifer Wampler and Dr. Stephen Fisher did not do their research in the hazards of asbestos and the newest EPA regulations. Much less the health hazards to our children and teachers at Cleveland County Schools.

EPA regulations require an analysis of asbestos abatement methods, including "encapsulating" of asbestos products. The use of Rhino-Shield type products is discouraged because of a multitude of reasons. First, the underlying asbestos containing material has to be of sound construction so that the encapsulating material will not soon flake off and again become a source of asbestos containing "dust" that students and school children might breath into their lungs. The documents Luke Queen produced regarding the Rhino-Shield application spoke not one word that any kind of inspection and evaluation had been conducted to determine if the asbestos

containing materials at North Elementary School were amenable to encapsulation.

The EPA rules and guidelines also tend to discourage the application of encapsulation materials for use as planned at North Elementary because the encapsulation process leaves the Asbestos in place. Eventual demolition of the North Elementary School will then expose workmen to the asbestos containing materials and the encapsulating materials will hinder the recovery and burial of the asbestos. Causing a large increase in the cost of recovery and disposal of the asbestos containing materials. Luke Queen and the School Board obviously ignored EPA safety recommendations in lieu of short-term cost savings. Something the asbestos industry did that cost them billions of dollars in jury awards and eventual bankruptcy.

Not to mention the potential of exposing students and teachers to the dangerous asbestos fibers if the Rhino-Shield products do not hold up well if the underlying surface is unstable. Which is probably the case since the materials are damaged, generating a work report in the first place. Remember the incompetent "chain of command" organization described in the first part of this article???

Folks, I don't know about you, but if I were a teacher and parent of a child attending North Elementary School, or any of the many schools within CCS that contain asbestos, I would be filling out employment applications or attendance applications to Pinnacle Classical Academy as soon as possible. Or anywhere out from under the incompetence of the Cleveland County School Board and administration under Robert "Luke" Queen. ASAP, if not before. Asbestos is just too dangerous to human health to be entrusted to the buffoons running CCS!!!

**Editor's Note: "Rhino-Shield" is a tough plastic material typically used as an application to produce a "liner" for pick-up truck beds to enhance the "appearance" of the vehicle.**

The Rhino-Shield coating depends on the metal truck bed for its structural integrity.