



# Environmental Protection Department

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## Asbestos-What You Need to Know

Written by James Payne

Most of the time when we think about fibers and their ability to be woven into products, we think of cotton, wool, silk and perhaps other materials. However, asbestos represents a set of 6 different minerals that have the ability to be woven as well. An additional characteristic that makes asbestos unique is its resistance to fire and heat. Because of these properties, it has been used to make firefighters clothing, fire blankets, and heat-prone applications such as brake pads. It can also be mixed into other building materials such as plaster, pipe insulation and flooring and roofing products. The benefits of asbestos has been recognized for a long time, tracing back to times B.C. However, in the early 1900's it was also discovered that it was very toxic when inhaled. Given its small size and its fragile nature, it can easily be crushed and brought into a human's respiratory system.



Naturally occurring asbestos (EPA)

When it enters the human body, it has the potential to cause many respiratory diseases including lung cancer, asbestosis, and mesothelioma (cancer within the lining of the lungs). Generally, these diseases are brought on by breathing in elevated concentrations of any type of asbestos over long periods of time. It is important to note that asbestos is listed as a hazardous air pollutant (HAP) under the Clean Air Act. Workers in shipyards and asbestos mines and others who directly work with and around asbestos are more prone to the carcinogenic effects as a result of continued exposure.

Because of their size and fragility, the fibers are not perceptible to the naked eye, another reason for exercising caution when dealing with potential asbestos containing materials (ACM). Renovating, repairing, or demolishing buildings that have had the potential to utilize asbestos requires great care, often in the form of an asbestos survey. An asbestos survey will involve contracting a licensed asbestos inspector to take samples of potential ACM and sending the collection to a laboratory. The laboratory will implore a scientific method to determine if the materials do in fact contain asbestos, often using specialized microscopic work.

As fibers in of themselves do not pose a threat unless released, it is generally best practice to not disturb the original application unless needs dictate. Often in older home environments, heater vents and pipes are insulated with an asbestos wrap. If the wrap is intact and in good shape, there is generally no health concern. However, cracked, frayed, loose or broken ACM can become airborne, and present a health risk. If there are concerns or questions regarding whether or not something does contain asbestos, best practice is to assume that it contains it, until it is properly determined. If in fact the asbestos does need to be removed, it also needs to be done by a qualified and licensed professional.



ACM in home pipes (Certified Asbestos Services Inc.)

Don't track material that could contain asbestos through the house. If you cannot avoid walking through the area, have it cleaned with a wet mop. If the material is from a damaged area or if a large area must be cleaned, call an asbestos professional.

For more information on working with asbestos and safeguarding yourself and your family, please visit the California Air Resources Board website at <http://www.arb.ca.gov/enf/asbestos/asbestos.htm> or the EPA's website at <http://www2.epa.gov/asbestos/protect-your-family>.

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# Morongo's Air Quality School Flag Program

Written by Pamela Atcitty, Environmental Specialist

## School Flag PROGRAM

Know Your Air Quality to Protect Students Health



### What is the School Flag Program?

The School Flag Program, started at Morongo School during Earth Day, uses brightly colored flags to help our children, parents, school personnel, and the community be aware of their daily air conditions. Knowing the air quality conditions can help protect individuals both at school and at home. The flag colors correspond to the colors used in the EPA's Air Quality Index (AQI), which tells us how clean or polluted the air is for that day.

### Why should we know when our air is unhealthy?

Air quality can become unhealthy due to pollutants such as ground-level ozone and particle pollution. Ozone is especially damaging to the lungs of children and those who work and play outside. Particle pollution, especially fine particles such as those found in smoke, haze or dust, contains microscopic solids or liquid droplets that are so small that they can get deep into the lungs and cause serious health problems.

Children (including teenagers) are at greater risk from air pollution because their lungs are still developing and they breathe more air per pound of body weight than adults. People with asthma are also more likely to have symptoms when pollution is in the air.

### How will Morongo benefit from the School Flag Program?

When members of the Morongo school and community know what the daily air quality is, they can adjust their activities to reduce their exposure to air pollution. Regular physical activity— at least 60 minutes a day— promotes health and fitness. The purpose of the school flag program at Morongo is to help children continue to exercise while protecting their health when the air quality is unhealthy. Children, including those with asthma, can continue to stay active even when air quality is unhealthy by modifying their activities or, in

some cases, moving their activities indoors.

### Where else can you find information about Morongo's air quality?

You can find the daily AQI on the ACCESS channel and on the tribal website.

Information and updates can also be found at:

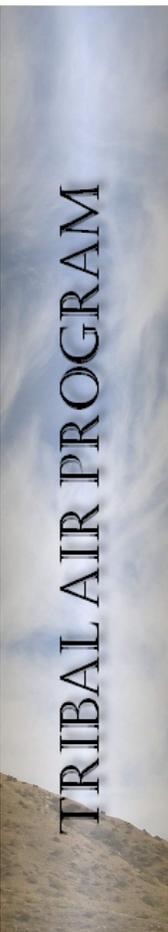
[www.airnow.gov](http://www.airnow.gov).



The raising of the first flag during Earth Day.

Morongo Air Quality School Flag Program	
Air Quality Index	What you should do:
 green GOOD	Great day to be active outside!
 yellow MODERATE	Good day to be active outside! Sensitive students should take it easy.
 orange UNHEALTHY FOR SENSITIVE GROUPS	OK to be outside for short activities. Don't forget to take breaks. Watch for coughing or shortness of breath.
 red UNHEALTHY	Consider moving activities indoors. Any outdoor activities should be less intensive with more breaks.
 purple VERY UNHEALTHY	Move all activities indoors or reschedule outside play to another day.

Actions you should take depending on the air quality.



Students at Morongo playing outside during a yellow flag day.

# Groundwater- The Hidden Water Resource

Written by Kimberly Miller, Environmental Specialist

Now that summer is here, many streams and water bodies are flowing less and drying up. This is expected because it has been awhile since there was any rain or snow. But have you been out in the canyons and noticed a seemingly random patch of green on the hillside or wondered why the Bog does not dry up? Maybe you have traveled along a stream and observed water was present in some places and absent in others. All of these things are attributable to groundwater. Groundwater is an important resource that is easy to forget about because it is usually hidden.



Groundwater is water stored in the pore spaces and cracks between particles of soil or rocks. It moves slowly through the ground and is stored in aquifers. When it rains or snows, the water that isn't evaporated, used by plants, or collected into rivers and streams can soak into the ground to replenish the aquifer. The top portion of the zone that is saturated with water is referred to as the water table. The height of the water table is important to determine when digging a well or building construction projects. The depth to the water table can be influenced by the amount of precipitation, topography, land use in the area and pumping from wells. Morongo's drinking water comes from groundwater wells.

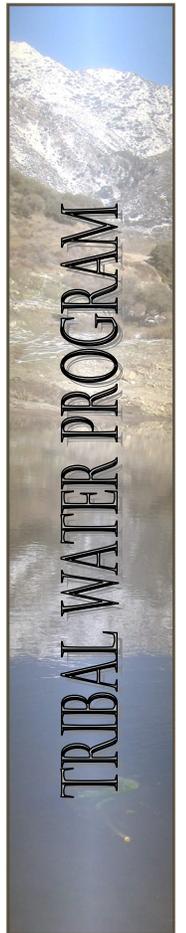
Where the water table is higher than a stream bed, water will always be present in that area. If the water table lowers, water may disappear further downstream. When groundwater appears at the land surface, it can create springs or wetlands in typically dry areas. A large reason people could survive in our desert climate was that natural springs and high groundwater provided abundant and easy to access water sources. Just think of how many nearby places are named for springs: Palm Springs, Desert Hot Springs, and Thousand Palms to name a few. Springs can form when groundwater reaches the surface due to a crack in the rock or a barrier blocking the flow. This occurs a lot in Southern California due to so many faults passing through the area. On Morongo, the Bog was formed when a part of the San Andreas Fault uplifted the bedrock and created an impervious

barrier for the groundwater. Instead of being confined to a small area like a spring, the groundwater seeped up creating a wetland. Also at Morongo, One Horse Spring had a basin built around it so the water could be diverted through a pipe into a large pool that people used to use. The pipe no longer fills the pool, but a small amount of water still flows from the spring.

Being aware of the presence of groundwater is important to help protect it. Even though water may not be visible on the surface, it is still there and vulnerable to pollution. Preserving the quality of groundwater and valuable resources such as springs, means making sure nothing that could contaminate water is dumped onto the ground anywhere at any time.



The basin surrounding the spring source at One Horse



# Be Smart About Using Household Cleaners!

Written by Dana DeVries, Environmental Supervisor



as our environment.

Today's household cleaning products have made cleaning easier and healthier – reducing the spread of germs and infectious diseases. Just because they help keep us healthy does not mean they are safe. Many modern household cleaning products contain harmful chemicals that are toxic, corrosive, flammable, and can react with other chemicals. One of the most common causes of poisoning in young children and adults are household cleaning products. It is important to understand how to use cleaners properly and safely to protect our health as well

Always read the product label. Labels will have precautionary statements such as “WARNING”, “DANGER”, “TOXIC”, “CORROSIVE”, “FLAMMABLE”, or “POISON” to tell you if the product is harmful to you, your family, and the environment. The label also contains just about everything we need to know about a product including how to use, store, and dispose of it safely and what to do if you or your child are accidentally exposed to the chemical. Because the label is so important, always keep cleaners in their original packaging and never remove product labels.

Always follow directions to use the cleaning product safely. Some products, such as oven and drain cleaners, are very hazardous to your health and require handling with great care. Never mix cleaning products. Products that are safe when used alone can become dangerous when mixed with other products. For example, mixing any product containing chlorine bleach (bleach, all-purpose cleaner, mildew remover, etc) with any ammonia product (window cleaner, dishwashing detergent, etc) results in a chemical reaction that releases dangerous gases.

Make sure all household cleaners are stored upright, in closed containers, away from food, and either locked up or in an area inaccessible to children. Half of all unintentional poisonings occur in children under the age of six and only half of these accidents occur while the product is being used. It is very important to store these hazardous materials out of a child's reach. Also, avoid distractions or interruptions when using cleaners in a house with young children and do not leave buckets, rags, or cleaners unattended. If you or a family member touched, tasted, or inhaled something that may be harmful, do not hesitate to contact the California Poison Control System for immediate and free expert treatment advice and referral over the phone. ([www.calpoison.org](http://www.calpoison.org))



Household cleaners can have a negative effect on our environment when improperly disposed of. Cleaners should never be dumped down a sink, toilet, or bathtub drain (unless the products are made for that purpose) and they should never be dumped outside on the ground or in a waterway. The best option is to use the entire cleaner for its intended purpose. Empty cleaning containers should be disposed of by following the directions on the label. Often, these empty containers can be recycled. If the cleaning product can no longer be used, it cannot be thrown in a dumpster or recycle bin where it could harm workers, children, or animals. All unwanted household cleaners need to be disposed of as household hazardous waste. Counties and cities offer free household hazardous wastes drop-off days to residents – find a location near you by visiting [earth911.org](http://earth911.org). Morongo tribal members and residents can bring their household hazardous wastes to the next drop-off day on Saturday, August 16, 2014 from 9am-noon (see page 8 for details!).

## Community Service Congratulations

Written by Dana DeVries, Environmental Supervisor



Left: Jon Castillo,  
Environmental  
Tech.

Right: Derrick  
Cook, Volunteer

The Environmental Protection Department would like to thank Derrick Cook for completing 60 hours of community service with the department! Derrick volunteered every Friday for nearly two months with our department to complete the community service requirement for his college scholarship. He helped us to clean up dumpsites, stencil storm drains, remove invasive species, maintain our native garden and compost bins, and other field tasks. It truly was a dirty job but he never complained! Derrick is reliable, dependable, and an extremely hard worker. We are so grateful he chose to volunteer with our department!



Derrick cleaning  
up an invasive  
species called  
Bull Thistle.



## Disposing of Used Cooking Oil

Written by Jon Castillo, Environmental Technician

Proper disposal of your cooking oil and other greases will help prevent a sewage backup in your home. Many of us cook at home using cooking oil or food products that produce oils. Our first thought is to dump the used oil down the drain while it's hot with hot water running.

Here are reasons why **not** to dump your cooking oil down drains or into your environment.

- ⇒ Can cause pollution in our water.
- ⇒ Because we will reuse that water.
- ⇒ Waste water treatment plant will spend less money & energy to treat water.
  - ⇒ Reduction in blockage and repairs to sewage pipes & septic tanks.
- ⇒ Reduction in the probability of the spreading of microorganisms that are harmful to health.
  - ⇒ Reduction in the dependence on energy from overseas.

As cooking oil cools and solidifies, eventually grease will build up until it completely blocks sewer pipes. Cooking oil blockage can also cause septic overflows that can pose health and environmental hazards to animals and water. Garbage disposals don't keep grease out of sewer pipes. It can cause sewage to backup in septic lines and damages that can be expensive to repair.

Cooking oils are nontoxic, but they can still harm the environment by coating plants and wildlife. Do not throw your cooking oil in bushes or trees. The odor of cooking oil may attract rodents, opossums, raccoons, dogs, coyotes, and cats, which may stay or return to your home looking for food.

We suggest you keep a small container by your stove to collect fats, grease and oil, and dispose of it in one of the local cooking oil recycling containers.

Registered transporters pick up the cooking oil and grease so it can be recycled into livestock feed or into biodiesel, a cleaner-burning alternative fuel for diesel automobiles and trucks.



Snack Bar at the Morongo Ball Field



### Local Cooking Oil Recycling Containers

Morongo Community Center  
Morongo Ball Field's Snack Bar  
Morongo Tribal Hall



# SPRING REVIEW



**Spring Photo Contest Winner**  
**Mark Pullen, TANF**  
"Bugs sharing an intimate moment across the street from Morongo Faith Chapel just off of Hathaway Canyon road."

**Spring Photo Contest Runner-up**  
**Julie Flores, IT**  
"Springtime on the course....warm, calm, tranquil."



For successfully completing environmental education, we pressed flowers to make nature print cards with the Little Creators students.  
Left: Kelsey Bosch, Environmental Admin. Assistant  
Right: Pamela Atcitty, Tribal Air Program  
Background: Kimberley Miller, Tribal Water Program

## Upcoming Events with the Morongo Environmental Protection Department



### Household Hazardous Wastes & Electronic Wastes Drop-off Day

Saturday, August 16, 2014

9am – Noon, Behind Public Works

Drop-off any unwanted hazardous materials including tires, cleaners, pool chemicals, pesticides, oil, automotive fluids, herbicides, aerosol cans, fluorescent light bulbs, batteries, televisions, refrigerators, and any electronic devices. For more information, call 951-755-5128.

### Go Paperless!



If you would like to receive electronic versions of the Morongo Environmental Protection Department's Quarterly Newsletter and information on other Environmental Events, please sign-up at [www.morongonation.org/content/newsletter](http://www.morongonation.org/content/newsletter).



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A SOVEREIGN NATION

Environmental Protection Department

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