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## Asbestos found in school building

By **Melissa Russell**/ correspondent

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**A**n unexpected vein of asbestos material found during demolition work at Reading Memorial High School will cost at least \$50,000 to remove, and there may be even more lurking behind the building's walls, project manager Scott Dunlap told the School Committee Monday night.

The waterproofing material was discovered embedded within two layers of cinderblocks within the exterior walls of the old "A" building, Dunlap said. In typical construction brick veneer is backed by air space and eight inches of concrete block, Dunlap explained. In an unusual twist, workers at the high school found asbestos waterproofing sandwiched between two four-inch concrete blocks.

"No one had ever seen this before," Dunlap said. "Someone must have been very paranoid about water leakage."

The material was discovered along the corridor that housed the cafeteria and the school store, but could potentially be in the entire front of the "A" building, which was built in the 1950s, Dunlap said.

The debris must be disposed of as hazardous material, at an expected cost of \$50,000, Dunlap said. It remains to be seen if similar material will be found in other parts of the old construction. If so, disposal costs could rise to \$200,000, Dunlap said. The costs will be paid from the project's contingency fund, currently at \$1.46 million, although the fund has already been tapped to repair a damaged culvert under the playing field. That money is due to be reimbursed by the town.

The general contractors, TLT Construction, must dispose of hazardous waste as it is specifically outlined in their contract, Dunlap said.

"We are saying to TLT that we will only pay the difference in disposal between regular material and hazardous material," he said. "We will count every dumpster that goes out and price it."

Students will soon occupy the high school, and, for the first time since construction began, will be in close proximity to the active construction site. In an effort to create as much space between workers and students, parking has been reconfigured to allow students and staff to park away from construction workers' vehicles, Superintendent Patrick Schettini reported.

"We have been doing our very best to separate construction from the student areas," Schettini said. "This year will be more difficult."



Construction work continues on Reading Memorial High School, with work in progress seen here around the new football field. - Staff photos by Mac McEntire

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In order to guarantee student and worker access, a temporary gravel-surfaced parking lot at the field house, and accessible via Oakland Road, has been expanded, providing 84 spots. Contractor parking in the upper parking lot will be fenced off, and off limits to students and staff. The number of parking spots will be identical to last year, Schettini said.

Additionally, construction workers will be required to wear name badges on the front and back of their hard hats, to aid in identification in the event of any interaction with students, Schettini said.

In other business, the Committee voted to close out the fiscal year 2005 school budget, returning \$31,358 to the Town's general fund, and \$14,656 for building maintenance.

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