

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Abatement and demolition ready to resume at retired high school

At the retired Montezuma-Cortez High School building, equipment is lining up to begin the second phase of demolition. School district officials expect work to resume on Oct. 11.

In response to a July application, the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment recently ruled that the asbestos block primer used in construction of the building must be treated as friable and must be removed before any demolition takes place.

“We really pushed for our scientific point that the asbestos was bound in a resinous material and was not in a form that would be released into the atmosphere,” said Jamie Haukeness, Kemper Elementary School principal, who is also in charge of facilities for Montezuma-Cortez School District RE-1. “We believed the building could be demolished safely at less expense to taxpayers.

“We had a solid demo plan, but CDPHE did not approve it because they deemed the asbestos in the block coating to be friable, so we’re ready to abate the asbestos.”

RE-1’s abatement contractor, Colorado Hazard Control, will use hydro-blasting, an approved abatement procedure that uses pressurized water to remove all coating from the concrete blocks. The wastewater then will be contained and transported to an approved waste facility in Utah.

Once all asbestos-containing materials are abated section by section, those parts of the building will contain no regulated materials and Iron Mountain Demolition will begin razing them. The concrete blocks, now free of asbestos, and other building materials will be taken to the Montezuma County Landfill or will be recycled.

Throughout the process, air quality will be monitored by Colorado Hazard Control, a certified air monitoring specialist.

Sometime in the next few weeks, a CDPHE representative will return to the site to observe the efficacy of another abatement method, which uses dry ice (carbon dioxide) to remove the block coating from the blocks. This method might reduce costs by creating less asbestos-containing waste material than hydro-blasting, because the CO₂ would evaporate, leaving only the block coating.

Compared to transporting all building materials that currently contain asbestos, either

block-cleaning technique will significantly reduce the volume of hazardous waste that will need to be taken to Utah.

“The district’s top priority has always been public health and safety,” Haukeness said. “With that topmost in our minds, we want to remove the building as quickly as possible, at the least cost to the taxpayer, and make that property available for a new use.”

Colorado Hazard Control will be hiring two to four local workers for the project. Individuals interested in applying should contact Express Employment Professionals at 970-403-8730.

Work will begin on the interior of the west side of the building. Demolition is expected to be completed by spring.

For more information about the project, visit RE-1’s website, www.cortez.k12.co.us, or call the district office at 970-565-7282.