



## The Alewife Study Group April 2018 Update

The **purpose of this update** is to summarize the history of Alewife Study Group and the WR Grace (GCP) site, the extent of asbestos contamination on the site, the risks associated with asbestos and specific regulations governing soil disturbance at Grace.

Neighbors founded **Alewife Study Group (ASG)** in 1995 to enhance the quality of life in the Alewife area of North Cambridge especially on and near the Grace site. We work to ensure an inclusive, participatory process on quality of life issues including (but not limited to) hazardous waste (such as asbestos), excessive traffic, flooding, and protection of habitats and natural resources. We research and communicate findings. *Trapped asbestos fibers (buried in soil or trapped in shingles, for example) do no harm, it is only when fibers become airborne that serious public health risks are triggered.*

### Alewife Study Group Accomplishments:

- 1997-98 - Alewife Study Group (ASG), Grace & Cambridge tested the Grace soil. Of the 365 soil samples taken, 64 had visible asbestos--nearly 1 of every 5 samples. According to an industry standard calculation, an estimated 600,000 - 1.2M lbs of loose fiber asbestos resides in Grace soil.
- 1999 - ASG proposed the first-in-the-nation **Asbestos Protection Ordinance**. Passed by the Cambridge City Council.
- 2005 - ASG negotiated with Grace the **Activity and Use Limitation** on its deed.

### The Grace Site

The Grace site includes over 20 acres bounded by the Rindge Avenue fences around **Jerry's Pond**, Alewife Brook Parkway (Routes 2,3,16), Russell Field and Whittemore Avenue. The Alewife T runs through the site as does the Minuteman bike path. Comeau and Russell fields abut the site. The property inside these fences is owned by Grace.

### History of the Grace Site

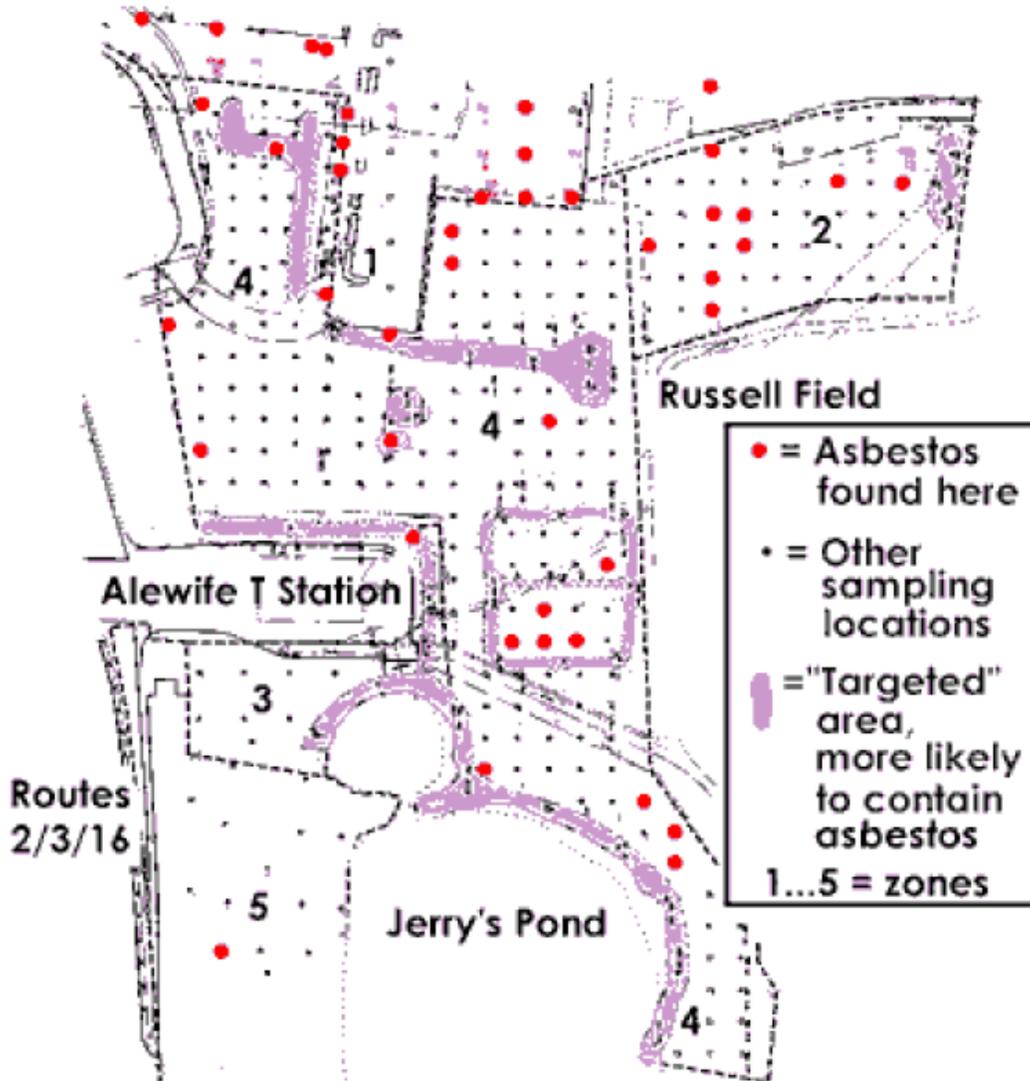
- **2005 -> Present** - ASG monitors the Grace site, ensuring no soil below 6 inches is disturbed. If excavation below 6" is necessary, Grace must "tent and vent" as per the **Asbestos Protection Ordinance**, just as homeowners must "tent and vent" when removing asbestos from their homes.
- **2004 - 05** - Grace requests meeting with ASG to agree on the terms of an **Activity and Use Limitation (AUL)** on their property deed. After multiple meetings, ASG & Grace agree on terms of the AUL.
- **1990's**
  - Asbestos protection ordinance passed by Cambridge City Council.
  - Results from soil sampling across entire site indicate asbestos and a long list of other contaminants in the soil at high enough levels to pose a health risk.
  - Environmental Site Assessment, Subsurface Conditions at Russell Field Final Report filed indicated that subsurface soil was contaminated by asbestos, metals, and semivolatile organic analytes, and groundwater was contaminated by nickel. MADEP assigns tracking numbers RTN 3-17087 & 3-17014.
- **1980's** - One Alewife Center constructed. 21E Superfund enacted on Grace site. Excavated soil from Alewife T tunnel stored on site in open pits for 2 years, then removed or covered with soil.
- **1970's** - MBTA & Red Line extension to Alewife.
- **1960's & 1950's** - 1954 Grace buys Dewey & Almy, takes over production of DAXAD (includes asbestos fibers) and other Dewey & Almy products.

- **1919 - 1940s** - Dewey & Almy manufacture brake linings with asbestos & rubber sealants such as DAXAD. Clay pits/ponds used as “waste lagoons,” or “settling ponds” to mix naphthalene and sulphuric acid.
- **1919** – Dewey and Almy founded at present day site of W.R. Grace (also known as GCP).
- **Before 1919** - Grace site was initially marshy land, later mined for clay, which was made into bricks.

### Dangers of Asbestos

Asbestos is a particular danger. It does not degrade in the environment. It cannot be remediated. If fibers become airborne they can lodge in the lungs, where they stay forever. Asbestos has been repeatedly and irrefutably proven to cause cancer. No level of exposure has been shown to be safe, despite numerous studies. Children are particularly vulnerable, particularly to mesothelioma as indicated in the AAP Policy Statement "calculated risk escalates rapidly when time since first exposure exceeds about 40 years. Early childhood exposure, even at very low levels, thus becomes a significant factor..."

### Final Results: Asbestos in Soil Samples Taken by Grace, City of Cambridge and ASG.



**Based on site history, the highlighted areas are more likely to contain asbestos.**  
(Note some highlighted areas remain to be tested).

For further information, please see [www.alewife.org](http://www.alewife.org) or contact Lisa Birk at [lisawbirk@gmail.com](mailto:lisawbirk@gmail.com).