



## Alewife Study Group July 2018 Update

Dear Neighbors,

In April 2018 you may have seen this activity on Russell Field:

**Who are they? And what are they doing?** They are CDM Smith Inc, hired by the City to test Russell Field soils for asbestos and other toxins. The City is now replacing Russell's turf.

**Why test for asbestos and other toxins on Russell Field?** Since 1919, 20+ acres next to Russell Field have housed a chemical plant, first called Dewey & Almy, then W. R. Grace (now GCP). Dewey and Grace manufactured products with asbestos, possibly into the 1970s.



In 1997-98 neighbors (led by Alewife Study Group and sister group, Alewife Neighbors, Inc.) teamed up with the City and Grace. Together we took and tested 356 soil samples from Grace's 20+ acres.

One in 5.7 samples had asbestos. According to an industry standard calculation, an estimated 600,000 - 1.2M lbs of loose fiber asbestos resides in Grace soil. (See map, other side.)

### What is Asbestos?

Asbestos is a microscopic fiber that can cause deadly cancers of the lungs. Asbestos, a microscopic fiber, easily becomes airborne and once airborne, can be inhaled.

### What are "safe" limits for asbestos?

An evaluation by NIOSH\*, CDC's National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, concluded that there is "no evidence" for "a 'safe' level of asbestos exposure." Fortunately, Grace/GCP's asbestos is trapped below 6" of soil: Fibers can't become airborne. Currently, therefore, there is no health risk. \**National Institute for Occupational Safety & Health Publication # 77-169, Revised Recommended Asbestos Standard, p. 92*

### The news on Russell Field is Good.

CDM took 45 samples. Neighbor group Alewife Study Group (ASG) took "splits" from each of those samples. CDM tested all 45. We had 13/45 samples tested by Geolinsight. ASG has worked with Geolinsight for 20+ years. The final reports issued in May and June of 2018 found: Asbestos was NOT detected in any samples.

**Thank You, Cambridge DPW** for working with ASG to ensure Russell Field is safe.

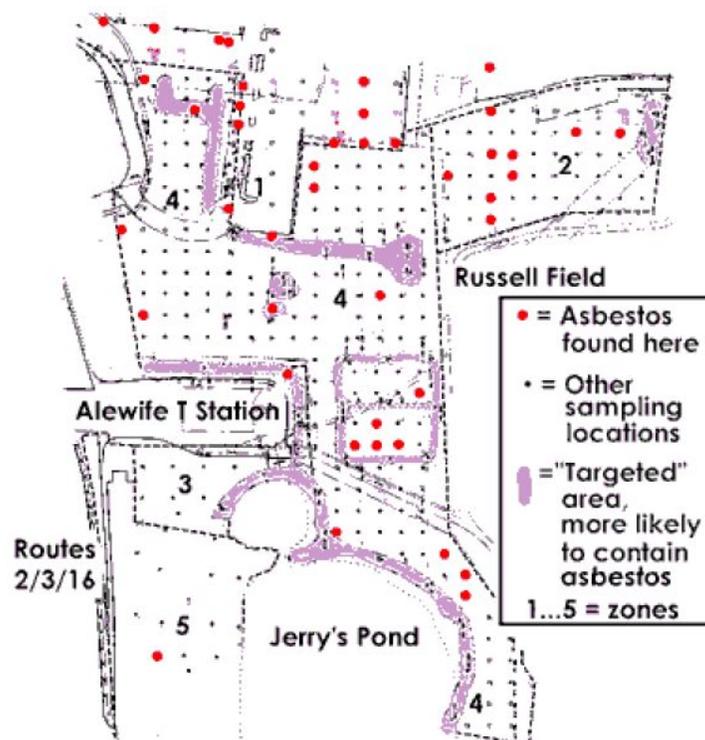
Want more info? Visit [www.alewife.org](http://www.alewife.org) or email neighbor Lisa Birk at [lisawbirk@gmail.com](mailto:lisawbirk@gmail.com)

## History of Alewife Study Group

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.

### Alewife Study Group (ASG) Accomplishments

- 1997-98 - ASG, Grace & Cambridge test Grace soil. Of 365 soil samples taken, 64 had visible asbestos--1 of every 5.7 samples.
- 1999 - ASG proposed & got passed the first-in-the-nation **Asbestos Protection Ordinance**.
- 2004 - 06 Grace invites ASG to negotiate terms of an **Activity and Use Limitation (AUL)** on Grace deed. Final AUL deed restriction filed March 2006.
- 2005 - 06 and again in 2018, ASG worked with the city to test Russell Field soil for asbestos and other toxins. In 2006, the city covered Russell Field with a foot of clean soil.
- 2016 - W.R. Grace carves out its Whittemore Avenue plant. Now called GCP.
- **1995 -> Present** - ASG is liaison with GCP and neighbors and monitors the Grace/GCP site to protect people, 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. *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.*



**Asbestos in Grace/GCP soil.** Samples Taken by ASG, WR Grace & Cambridge.

**NOTE:** Based on site history, **highlighted areas are more likely to contain asbestos.** Some highlighted areas remain to be tested.

Want more info? Visit [www.alewife.org](http://www.alewife.org) or contact neighbor Lisa Birk at [lisawbirk@gmail.com](mailto:lisawbirk@gmail.com).