

Local News

# Asbestos inspections end; abatement plans in process

The inspection phase of the diocesan asbestos abatement program has been completed two weeks ahead of schedule, and diocesan asbestos coordinator Art Bragg is cautiously optimistic about the results.

"We're not aware of any really serious problems at this point," Bragg said. "There are no imminent closures of schools because of asbestos. If we knew of such a situation, the school would be closed already."

By Tuesday, August 23, a total of 79 facilities — including all diocesan schools, six of the Catholic high schools in the diocese, St. Joseph's Villa, and the Sisters of St. Joseph Motherhouse and the St. Joseph's Convent and Infirmary — had been inspected by Hall-Kimbrell Environmental Management Inc., the firm the diocese contracted with to conduct the inspections, complete necessary sampling of material that potentially contains asbestos, and develop drafts of the necessary management plans. During July and August, inspectors from the company visited the 79 facilities, examining every room and space for asbestos, and sending samples to the company's labs for testing.

Bragg said he was pleased by the speed with which the inspections were conducted, noting that the Diocese of Rochester is "probably the only school district around that has its schools completely inspected at this point."

The inspections were done in compliance with the federal Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act of 1987 (AHERA). But although the inspections are now out of the way, Bragg acknowledges that his work has only just begun.

This week, Hall-Kimbrell will begin sending the diocese the results of lab tests and preliminary drafts of the asbestos-management plan for each facility. Bragg will meet with pastors, principals and designated asbestos coordinators for each separate facility to discuss the results. They will then decide on a room-by-

room, space-by-space basis which of several stipulated containment options is warranted by each situation. Those options range from regular inspection and maintenance of asbestos-containing materials to complete removal of the asbestos. The final management plan, which must be submitted to the state education department by October 12, will spell out exactly how the diocese plans to deal with the asbestos in each spot it is found.

Bragg said the task of completing all these steps by the deadline is formidable. By July 1, 1989, the law requires that the diocese — and all schools and school districts in the United States — must begin implementing the plans. Bragg will monitor progress in each facility, maintaining and updating a copy of each of the management plans.

One school in the diocese, Bishop Kearney High School, has already completed its asbestos-management program independently. This summer, the school spent approximately \$500,000 to completely remove all asbestos containing materials from its facilities.

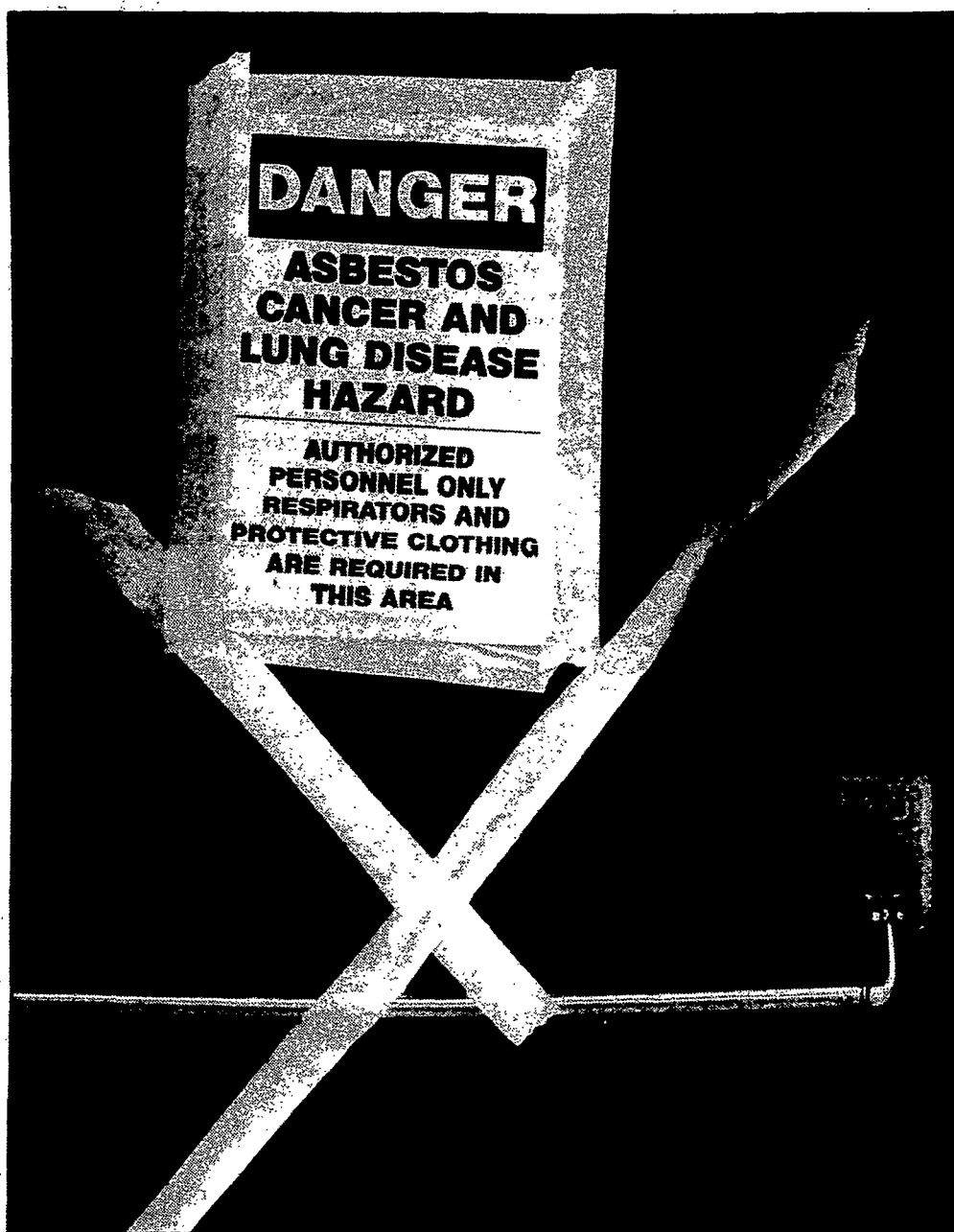
Bragg acknowledged that asbestos abatement can be expensive, but he said he cannot estimate potential costs until the lab results and the management plans are completed.

"I have no idea at this point what costs we're facing," he said, noting, however, that "the AHERA law permits us to choose the least burdensome method of control which is sufficient to protect human health and the environment." Bragg said that during his discussions with parish and school representatives, he will try to help them discover the least expensive way to deal with asbestos in their facilities.

At the same time, however, he said, no shortcuts will be taken in developing or implementing the management plans.

"It may be overkill," Bragg concluded, "but if it saves lives, it's worth it."

— Lee Strong



Bonnie Tráfélet/Courier-Journal

Signs and taped-over doorways blocked the entrances to Bishop Kearney High School while crews removed asbestos from the building.

## Education plan

Continued from Page 1

"well-integrated catechetical plan" incorporating all components of parish-level education.

"The focus is going to be on all the educational efforts presently taking place and what could take place," Brother Walsh noted. These efforts include not only schools, but also religious-education programs, adult education, the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults and sacramental preparation programs.

The plan outlined at St. Mary's calls for the organization of the Southern Tier cluster into four local groups centering on the Corning, Elmira, Ithaca and Owego areas. Each parish in the local groupings will send a representative to a local board, and each local board will in turn send three representatives to the cluster board. According to the plan, the names of the parish representatives are to be submitted to Bishop Clark by October 1. The first cluster meeting will be scheduled during the week of November 7. Next year, the cluster board will present to Bishop Clark a report outlining a comprehensive catechetical plan for the region.

The cluster board will consist of a pastor from a parish with a school, a pastor from a

parish without a school, a catechetical leader, and the representative of parishes in the cluster. The board will coordinate all educational activities in the regions, eventually making decisions about where programs will be located and how they will be financed, Brother Walsh noted.

During his portion of the presentation, Father Mulligan discussed how the reorganization will be financed over the next two years. The diocese will use funds it already has on hand from donations in excess of the 1987 Thanksgiving Appeal goal as well as unspent allocated funds from the 1987-88 diocesan budget, he said. In addition, the diocese will seek ways to reduce spending during the 1988-89 fiscal year, and will ask the diocesan Finance Council to consider a sale of investments in the diocesan portfolio. From these four sources, he estimated, the diocese will be able to free "a six-figure number" to fund the reorganization.

As part of its commitment to Catholic education, the diocese is already in the process of forming the Bishop's Commission on Catholic Education, Father Mulligan said. He reported that a pool of names is already being developed, and that plans call for the commission to begin meeting in September. Once that

commission is in place, a consultant will be hired to assist it.

Father Mulligan also noted that the diocese has contracted for the National Catholic Education Association to come to Rochester to present four two-day intensive workshops on how to market Catholic schools. The first two sessions are scheduled for October 11/12 and December 11/12 at the Pastoral Center. Dates for the other two sessions — which will be held in the spring — have not yet been set. The workshops will focus on marketing for image and increasing enrollment.

Father Mulligan said the multi-faceted plan presented at the meeting was a sign that there

"really is a serious commitment to move ahead" in terms of Catholic education in the diocese.

Initial reactions to the cluster plan among meeting participants were essentially positive. "I felt a positive support for Catholic education at all levels, said Vincent Moschetti, principal of All Saints Academy in Corning. "The diocese has now set in motion a process to reaffirm the importance of our work."

Mary Lou Tangorre, religious-education coordinator at St. Patrick's in Elmira for the last four years, noted that prior to the meeting, tension had existed between the staffs of

Continued on Page 11



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