

Local News

Diocese requests deadline extension for asbestos program

By Lee Strong

The Diocese of Rochester has applied for an extension of the October 12 federal deadline for submitting completed asbestos management plans for school systems.

The extension application, submitted October 5 to the state Education Department, was made at the request of Hall-Kimbrell Environmental Management, the company that inspected diocesan schools for asbestos and which will assist the diocese with developing individual management plans for each facility inspected.

If approved, the extension will give the diocese until May 9, 1989, to submit completed management plans. According to diocesan asbestos coordinator Art Bragg, such requests are almost automatically granted. School districts that do not submit either a completed management plan or a request for an extension by October 12 are subject to fines of as much as \$5,000 a day.

Letters announcing the diocese's plan to apply for the extension were sent to Catholic school teachers, employees and student's parents or guardians on September 15.

The diocese is not alone in applying for the extension, Bragg noted. The Rochester school board, for example, voted October 6 to apply for an extension for the City School District.

The Fairport Central School District submitted its application October 6.

Bragg noted that in July Congress approved the granting of extensions, after it became apparent that most school districts would be unable to meet the original deadline. "There are just not enough certified companies and certified inspectors," he said. "They're flooded; they just can't accommodate the numbers."

Compounding the problem of a shortage of companies to do the inspections is the fact that state guidelines governing inspections were not released until February, 1988. Most school districts had to delay hiring inspection companies until the requirements were set.

Bragg predicted that the diocese will be able to submit its final management plans before the end of December — well before the May deadline. He also pointed out that the diocese is actually further along in complying with the federal Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act of 1987 (AHERA) than any other Catholic school district in New York state.

"By careful planning, careful organization and foresight on the part of Jim Magee (buildings and property manager for the diocese), we just got as early a start as possible," Bragg said. "There are (public) school districts that haven't even done their inspections yet."

The basic inspections of diocesan schools were completed in August. A few additional quality-control inspections will be conducted in the next few weeks to take extra samples of material that potentially contains asbestos. Meanwhile, Bragg will be meeting with a representative from Hall-Kimbrell within the next two weeks to go through the *Asbestos Inspection Report and Management Plan*, a two-volume district management plan Hall-Kimbrell prepared for the diocese.

The report contains the results of the asbestos inspection of 81 diocesan schools and other facilities (including the Sisters of St. Joseph Motherhouse and St. Joseph's Villa), the results of lab tests on samples of potentially asbestos-bearing materials taken during the inspections, and suggestions for individual management plans. Following his meeting with the Hall-Kimbrell representative, Bragg will begin meeting with parish and school officials to review the findings for each school building and to develop the plans.

Under the terms of AHERA, districts are required to begin implementing their management plans by July 1, 1989.

Although he has not finished reading the report, Bragg's preliminary assessment of the results is positive.

"It's not quite as good as I'd hoped, but far less than I feared," Bragg said. "It's a lot closer to hope than fear."

Lab tests have shown that many of the suspected sample materials show no asbestos, Bragg said. For many diocesan schools, indications are that continued monitoring and maintenance of material containing asbestos will be sufficient, although a few schools may have to undertake the expensive process of complete removal of the material. After hearing Bragg's recommendations, parish and school representatives will decide which of the AHERA-approved options to use.

St. James to offer workshops

"Eldercare: A Community Concern" will be the focus of 13 free workshops sponsored by St. James Mercy Hospital. The evening sessions are open to any people who care for the elderly in their home.

Each session will take place in DeSales Hall of St. James Hospital School of Nursing, 440 Monroe Ave., Hornell.

The first workshop, "Physical and Emotional Response to Aging," is scheduled for Tuesday, Oct. 18. It will feature Dr. Stoner Horey, internist and medical director of the Hornell Nursing Home, and Joseph Striano, community services coordinator at the Veterans Administration facility in Bath.

It is not necessary to attend all 13 workshops. Call (607)324-3900, ext. 235 for information.

Formation

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served their pastoral internship for a year.

"Ordination is more than just a parish celebration; it's a diocesan celebration as well," Father Valenti said. "I think being ordained in Sacred Heart Cathedral highlights his relationship to the entire diocese."

Both priests pointed out as a weakness of the older formation program the fact that it lead to ordaining a priest candidate before he had a chance to test his vocation against practical experience.

"We never wanted to look on the diaconate as a time of testing," Father Conboy said. "Many times fellows would come into the diaconate with the academics, but they weren't ready for the practical aspects of pastoral ministry." Under the new system, he added, they will be more aware of what they will face as parish priests.

"I think we want someone who engages in pastoral ministry before their ordination," Father Valenti remarked. "The testing period should take place prior to the diaconate, not after, so the issue — 'Am I really called to pastoral ministry?' — should not come after ordination."

During the pastoral year, the seminarians will be assigned to parishes in which they will be introduced to a variety of parish ministries — such as religious education, hospital visits and sacramental preparation — that they will have to undertake as priests. They will also experience working with such parish groups as the parish council, school board, and spirituality groups and movements.

In addition, each candidate will be assigned a priest supervisor who will meet with him weekly throughout the year to discuss issues that arise as the seminarian works in the par-

ish. The supervisor will also help the seminarian assess his ability to interact with the parish staff and the community as a whole. In the process, the seminarian and supervisor will discuss areas in which the student needs to grow to be a more effective priest.

To further help the seminarian assess his performance, the supervisor will establish a parish support group that will meet with the seminarian every six weeks. The group will consist of lay men and women who will help the seminarian to better interact with parishioners. A synopsis of the group's insights and questions raised during the course of the year will be given to the supervisor.

At the end of the year, the priest supervisor will submit an evaluation of the candidate to the Priestly Formation Board, which, with the director of seminarians, will assess the seminarian's experience.

Insights from the pastoral-year experience can be used by the seminarian to find areas of study on which to focus during his last year of theological training, Father Valenti said.

"I would think they would return to fourth theology aware of some skills they may need to sharpen," the priest said. "They may discover some areas they still need to learn — say preparation of a couple for marriage or pastoral counseling — so they may opt to take an elective such as a pastoral-counseling course."

The overall goal of restructuring the formation program is to help the seminarian to test his vocation in light of practical experience and to better prepare him to make a decision on whether to petition for ordination to the priesthood, Father Valenti said.

"The year will help the men in beginning to deal with the challenges as well as the rewards of parish ministry," he predicted. "Before he makes any decisions about ordination, (the year) will deepen his understanding of the lifestyle of a parish priest and the nature of parish ministry."

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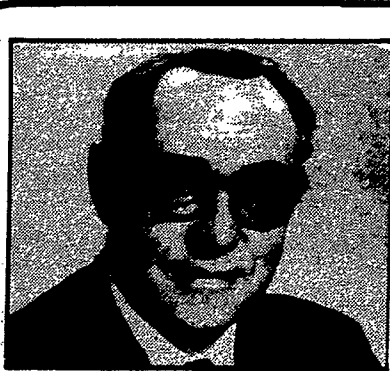
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After the management plans are submitted, the diocese will conduct two-hour training courses for school employees who will work in areas containing asbestos-bearing material. A two-day training course will also be offered for any employee who, in the course of his or her job, might disturb asbestos-containing material.

Despite the work that lies ahead, Bragg said he was satisfied with the progress made thus far in dealing with asbestos in diocesan schools and facilities.

"The bottom line is we appear to be in good shape," Bragg said. "We are pleased to be reassured that we are not overlooking any imminently dangerous situations."

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