

# Diocesan schools implement asbestos plans

By Lee Strong  
Staff writer

Ask any diocesan Catholic school administrator for his or her "asbestos management plan," and you'll be presented with a thick book, which, to the average person may seem incomprehensible.

That book would contain the "AHERA (Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act) Asbestos Management Plan." The act, passed by Congress in 1987, requires that all schools in the nation be inspected for asbestos-containing material, develop a management plan for the material, and submit to the state Education Department an executive summary of the plan by May 9 of this year.

According to Art Bragg, diocesan asbestos coordinator, plans for every diocesan school were submitted well before the deadline and each of the plans has received state approval.

Diocesan schools are now in the process of implementing those plans. Bragg noted that the state required each school to start work as soon as practically possible. "We committed to our own schedule — by 1 Sept. to begin the first project," he said. "Some have already done most of the work," and "most of the big jobs have been completed."

Diocesan schools have an unofficial goal of completing all required work within two years. Under AHERA regulations, schools are required to repair or remove any deteriorating asbestos-containing material that could release asbestos into the atmosphere. In most diocesan schools, however, inspections conducted last year by Hall-Kimbrell Environmental Management showed that the material is in good enough condition that only ongoing inspections and maintenance will be required.

Bragg acknowledged that several schools have had to undertake repairs or removal, adding, however, "I don't see any school threatened with closure because of the situation." One school, for example, simply opted to stop using one of its buildings because of asbestos, reducing the number of asbestos problems it had to address from 17 to four.

At this point, the difficulty for most schools is finding contractors available to remove or repair asbestos-containing materials. Such contractors currently are swamped with work since — as a result of AHERA — every public and private school in the area is in the process of implementing an asbestos-management plan. And, to avoid any potential liability for possible health problems resulting from contact with asbestos, Bragg said the diocese decided this June to use professional contractors rather than to train a team of diocesan personnel to remove or repair asbestos-containing material.

In addition, all school personnel whose jobs might cause them to enter areas where asbestos-containing materials have been found are obligated to complete a two-hour course about asbestos. Approximately two-thirds of the personnel have completed the course, and the others will do so in Sept. or Oct., Bragg said.

Each school is responsible for paying to implement its own management plan. According to James Magee, buildings and property manager for the diocese, the combined cost for diocesan schools over the next three years will be approximately \$1.5 million. That works out to an average of approximately \$7,000 per school per year. But Magee cautioned that actual cost for any specific school could differ greatly from this figure, based upon the amount of asbestos in the school and the means school administrators choose for dealing with the asbestos.

The New York State Council of Catholic Schools, meanwhile, is lobbying for state monies to be made available to help schools with removal and repair. Joseph McTighe, executive secretary of the council, expressed disappointment that the legislature ended its session this year without approving additional asbestos aid. Current aid programs tend to be based on the "degree of hazard and the degree of student exposure, so the larger schools tend to gobble up the money," he said.

McTighe said that efforts have now turned to the next legislative session. Council members have met with representatives of

the governor's office, and will testify for more aid at the Sept. 8 meeting of the state Board of Regents.

In addition to hoping for the passage of asbestos aid, Bragg said diocesan school officials are waiting to be partly reimbursed for the inspections conducted last year

and the development of the management plans. Bills for that work came to approximately \$400,000 — with 61 percent of the money being paid to Hall-Kimbrell and 39 percent going to the diocese for doing the voluminous paperwork and record keeping, and for providing support and advice.

## Activist contends termination related to pro-life involvement

By Richard A. Kiley  
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — Pro-life activist Gerald Crawford said last week that he had met with an attorney to discuss his dismissal from Eastman Kodak Company, but said that a lawsuit is unlikely.

Crawford, a member of Project Life of Rochester, was fired from his job as a quality control engineer Aug. 18 after 24 years with the company.

"They told me it was unacceptable that I had frequent absences," said Crawford, who spent 20 days in jail this summer for failing to comply with a judge's sentence stemming from a rescue mission in Brighton last September.

Kodak spokesman Paul Allen said it is company policy not to comment on matters of this nature.

Other than his absences due to court appearances and the jail sentence, Crawford said his attendance record was very good, noting that he had received perfect-attendance awards from Kodak for five years.

Crawford said his termination was ethically unjustified, likening his absences to those of other Kodak employees who — with the approval of the company — are absent from their jobs while performing public service activities.

Crawford and David E. Long, Project Life's executive director, were among 36

pro-life activists arrested Sept. 24 after conducting a rescue mission at the office of Dr. Morris Wortman, 200 White Spruce Blvd., Rochester.

Through a press release, Long said that Project Life condemned the firing of Crawford "as biased against those who take a stand for life."

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