

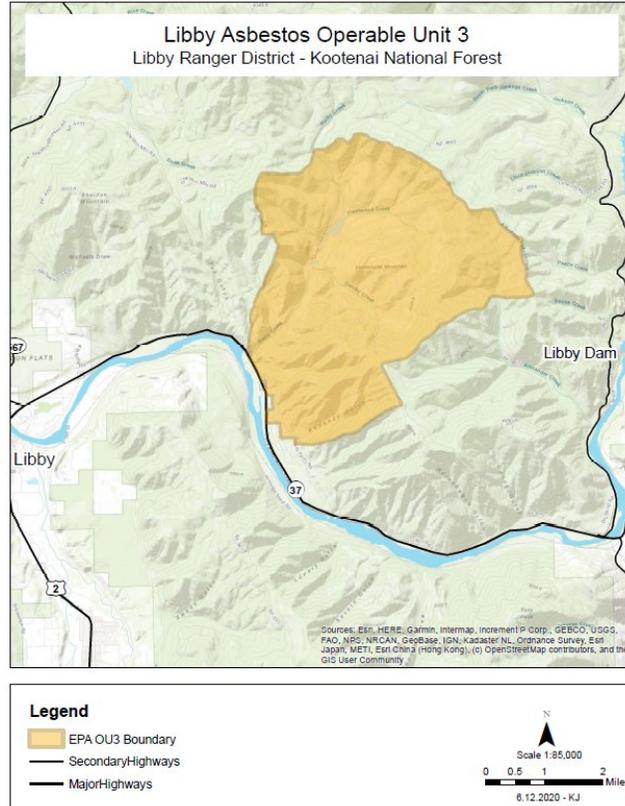
Information Regarding Libby Amphibole Asbestos Relative to FY24 Kootenai NF Common Stand Exam Task Order for Item 7

Vermiculite was discovered in 1918 by Edward Alley in the Rainey Creek area. WR. Grace operated and processed vermiculite from an open pit mine until 1990. Vermiculite contains varying concentrations of a form of asbestos referred to as “Libby amphibole asbestos” (LA). Asbestos was released during mining, milling, and processing operations; bulk materials placed at locations throughout the community. EPA and contractors began investigation and remediation of most heavily contaminated areas in 1999 due to high rates of asbestos related disease in Libby area, associated with amphibole asbestos found at the mine site.

The EPA defined the Libby Asbestos Superfund Site according to different Operable Units, most of which are cleaned up. Operable Unit 3 (OU3) is the mine and surrounding forested area and, according to the EPA, poses a human health risk to loggers and firefighters during certain activities. OU3 is 10,000 acres and is in the remedial stage of cleanup. Work inside OU3 requires special PPE for certain tasks.

Regarding the FY24 Kootenai NF Common Stand Exam Task Order for Item 7: OU3 Jackson Old Growth Quick Plot: No plots are located within any OU3 Hazard Area.

Vicinity map of OU3



Project work is adjacent to but not inside OU3.

Naturally-occurring asbestos or (NOA) refers to asbestos that is present as a natural component of soils or rocks, as opposed to asbestos in commercial products, or resultant due to mining or processing operations. The Libby Area has both NOA and contamination spread by mining and processing operations of vermiculite. Concentrations of LA tend to be highest closer to the mine. But, naturally occurring LA is likely present throughout the Kootenai Valley.

Forest Service employees do not wear special PPE outside of OU3 for asbestos. Employees are provided with asbestos awareness training and best management practices such as letting the dust settle between vehicles when driving on gravel roads, washing your hands and face after working in duff and soil, and keeping the interior of the vehicle clean. Periodic employee air monitoring is performed to affirm protocols are appropriate for the work.