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# Wal-Mart job found in violation

## Asbestos, oil spill at Easthampton site

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EASTHAMPTON - Wal-Mart employees were likely "liberating" air contaminants - and subjecting themselves to health hazards - as they worked inside a vacant Easthampton building in recent weeks.

Employees unloaded supplies from forklifts and stored them in the Pleasant Street building, which had been vacant since textile materials supplier National Nonwovens moved out last winter, according to Fire Chief David Mottor.

Tenants in the area alerted city officials about the activity, and upon inspection last week, officials found a number of building, health and fire code violations, most notably loose, or "friable," asbestos.

"Friable means it's unprotected and gets airborne very easily," Mottor said. "It exposes all the employees to asbestos which is (a) cause of lung cancer."

At issue are a large, disassembled boiler coated with asbestos and evidence of an oil spill, according to the health code violation notice.

Wal-Mart employees had been working in the Easthampton space for about a week, Mottor said. No retail sales were being made from the Easthampton location and no customers were exposed to hazards.

Other code violations include inadequate exits and facilities, failure to provide a smoke detector or carbon monoxide alarm and structural defects, among other issues.

"They moved in basically without a certificate of occupancy," Building Inspector Joseph Fydenkevez said of the retailer.

Health Agent Dennis Lacourse on July 1 ordered property owner Herbert Goldberg, of Jomar Corp. in Natick, to remove the contaminants within three months and not to lease the property until permits are obtained from the city and the building complies with the state Department of Environmental Protection and city requirements.

Goldberg hired a contractor to clear out the asbestos and has complied with the order, Lacourse said.

### Wal-Mart's move

Wal-Mart in Hadley recently rented the property to use for storage while its Hadley store undergoes renovations. Work at the Route 9 store includes repainting, laying tile and rearranging fixtures. That project is being run in phases at the store, which remains open during remodeling, according to store manager Bill Richards.

He noted the project kicked off this month and said he is unsure of an end date. The Easthampton space is used to store goods while areas of the Hadley store are remodeled.

Richards referred questions regarding the retailer's ongoing use of the Pleasant Street building to a corporate spokeswoman, who didn't return calls Thursday afternoon. It could not be determined

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whether store workers are barred from using the Easthampton space or whether health concerns related to their work there will be addressed.

Goldberg hired architectural firm O'Reilly, Talbot and Okun Associates Inc. in Springfield to bring the building up to code, said Fydenkevez, the building inspector.

"They're working on it as we speak," he said. "They're on top of it and they're doing a good job."

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