

TO: Asbestos Advisory Group (AAG) Members

FROM: Tom Livers, Director 

DATE: December 30, 2016

SUBJECT: Agency Response to AAG Recommendations

Thank you for your significant commitment of time and energy to help the Department of Environmental Quality identify key issues facing the Asbestos Control Program (ACP) and develop options to address those issues. I've received your recommendations dated December 9th and am impressed with the outcome. I commend you for your dedication and insight, which produced a set of very constructive recommendations.

I've discussed these with representatives from the ACP and we believe all of the recommendations reflect achievable strategic goals that provide the agency with program direction and priority. With that understanding, I have directed staff to incorporate all nine of these recommendations into current and future ACP business plans to ensure the program implements them in the spirit and intent that they were developed.

I understand there may be ongoing issues regarding rulemaking, legal process, and interpretation of policy and statute. These questions and concerns will require continued meaningful conversations between program staff and stakeholders. I also want to acknowledge the potential challenges posed by R9, which in part recommends DEQ allocate more staff time toward identifying non-compliance. I appreciate that the recommendation contemplates these challenges and offers several constructive suggestions for how to proceed.

I firmly believe that stakeholder involvement and ongoing discussion are critical to meeting the legislative intent of the Montana Asbestos Control Act for the purpose of limiting worker and public health exposures to asbestos. To that end, DEQ will continue to support the stakeholder outreach meetings as a forum to implement the recommendations and to discuss other topics as they arise.

Again, I appreciate your work and assure you that DEQ has taken the process and outcome seriously to help point the ACP in a positive direction that will be beneficial to all Montanans. Thank you.