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## Florida Tech will contest asbestos fines

Florida Tech has been fined \$10,500, after OSHA found workers had been exposed to asbestos during routine maintenance in a college dormitory.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration conducted an investigation after maintenance worker Robert Malfara complained that he and another worker were exposed to asbestos floor tiles while remodeling a student dormitory on the Melbourne campus, Watchdog reporter Jeff Schweers reports.

The workers chipped tiles off the floor and broke them up without respirators or any containment while students were milling about.

Investigators found employee exposure records were not made available to them upon request, and the presence of presumed asbestos in buildings built prior to 1980 hadn't been documented.

The original penalty was \$12,000, but it was reduced because of the size, history and good faith of the school. Yet, Florida Tech said it plans to contest the penalties before the Occupational Safety and Health Review Commission.

"We're saying it's wrong, and we're contesting it," Greg Peebles, the regulatory compliance officer for Florida Tech, told Schweers.

He said the OSHA report is full of errors, and the school will prove that at a hearing.

This is the first time the school has been fined for asbestos violations, but not for workplace-safety violations. The Florida Department of Environmental Protection last winter fined the school nearly \$180,000 for exposing staff and students to hazardous chemicals.

## High school traffic

Meanwhile, traffic could get thick on Malabar Road through western Palm Bay when Brevard County's newest high school -- likely to be named Heritage High -- opens near the street's western terminus next August.

Plans to widen Malabar to four lanes west of Minton Road have stalled. And until someone finds money to build the hoped-for St. Johns Heritage Parkway west of the city, Malabar is the only way in.

"Ask yourself how all the students, parents, school buses get to it while there is still other traffic around," reader Alan Kardoff of Palm Bay told me by e-mail. "There are no wide roads near 'Heritage.'"

Widening looked imminent until the housing market tanked.

City Hall was negotiating with Lennar Homes and other developers with projects in the area, making contributions for the road a condition for approval. (Lennar's Palm Vista would have included more than 3,000 homes.)

But with those developments stuck in park, there's no help, and no telling when Malabar Road will get two more lanes.

"The widening project is kind of stalled at the 60-percent-designed phase," Deputy City Manager Sue Hann told me Monday.

In the meantime, the city is buying homes and land from willing sellers to serve as right of way for future expansion, she said.

## Two more for feds

Add two more stretches of Interstate 95 to the list of projects recommended by the state as potential recipients of federal stimulus money:

- \$43 million to widen I-95 from Palm Bay Road to State Road 514 near Malabar, the list shows.
- \$35 million to widen I-95 from the Beachline Expressway to Port St. John.

That makes five projects in Brevard.

No, a \$30 million interchange for the Heritage Parkway is not included in the Palm Bay section of I-95, Hann said.

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