

19 March 2022

This update is intended to inform the community on progress of City of Newcastle's recovery activities across public spaces following the fire at the old Wool Store in Wickham on 1 March.

Islington Park Update

Islington Park was re-opened to the public earlier this week following clearance by independent assessors. The park had been closed since 2 March due to contamination generated by the fire.

Multiple specialist licensed asbestos removalist crews were deployed last week to clean the park. These crews removed fragments of asbestos containing materials (ACM) from grassed areas, gardens, the sporting oval, the carpark, bike paths, the playground, skate bowl and around the amenities building.

High traffic areas such as footpaths and the playground were also cleaned with HEPA (high efficiency particulate arrestance) vacuums.

Following the clean-up, an independent Licenced Asbestos Assessor inspected all areas of the park and found no visible asbestos remaining, allowing for a clearance certificate to be issued on Sunday 13 March.

Air monitoring was undertaken during the clean-up and also as part of the clearance inspection – with all results coming back clear of airborne asbestos fibres.

Testing of soil has been undertaken this week at 23 locations, including 12 within Islington Park. All samples have come back clear.

The public safety risk is therefore low.

This week, clean-up crews have been conducting visual inspections and ongoing cleaning on a daily basis due to recontamination at the park.

Whilst areas including streets and parks have been cleaned and given clearance, it is possible for occasional fragments to be re-introduced into the area from vehicles or falling from trees. **Further findings of fragments should be reported to the EPA's environment line on 131 555** so that the area can be listed for inspection and re-cleaning if necessary.

Safe mowing trial to commence 22 March

City of Newcastle is now planning ahead for the safe resumption of services such as mowing and ongoing park maintenance.

On Tuesday morning (22 March) crews will be on-site to conduct a mowing trial in the sporting oval area of Islington Park. The focus of the trial is to ensure mowing can safely be conducted from a staff and community perspective. The trial will involve mowing of a limited area only – not the entire park.

The oval and surrounding area including the public toilets and playground will be closed and taped off to prevent public access during the trial.

Prior to the trial commencing, a walk-through will take place with licenced asbestos removalists to identify and remove any visible fragments of asbestos materials in the area to be mowed.

Catchers will be used on mowing equipment, and all clippings will be safely disposed of into a plastic lined truck and sealed prior to transportation. A fine mist water spray will be utilised if required to keep clippings damp.

All City of Newcastle staff and others involved in the trial will wear appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) based on the activity they are undertaking.

Air monitoring will be undertaken during the mowing trial and spot samples will be taken from the equipment and machinery used in the trial before it is cleaned. The results of the air monitoring and sampling will determine the effectiveness of the mowing trial and inform safe planning for an eventual resumption of mowing across the park.

A similar trial was successfully undertaken earlier this week at Waratah Park, where all air monitoring and sampling results from tests taken during the trial came back clear.

Recommencement of green waste collection

Collection of green bins within some areas was temporarily suspended on 9 March to ensure that the risk of potentially contaminated materials within the green waste as a result of the fire could be appropriately assessed prior to collection, transportation, and processing at the Summerhill Waste Management Centre. Over the last week we have taken and tested samples from bins in a range of locations across this area. Asbestos was found to be present in only a small number of these bins.

To maintain the safety of the community and our staff, City of Newcastle has engaged a Licenced Asbestos Removal Contractor to develop and undertake a safe process for the collection of green bins across the impacted area.

For properties where bin collection was suspended, **licenced asbestos contractors will progressively empty and clean green bins over the course of several days from Monday 21 March.** Contractors will not enter properties to access bins so **it is important that your bin is on the kerb for collection.**

The next scheduled regular green bin collection day is on Wednesday 23 March. These bins will also be collected by a licenced Asbestos Removal Contractor from Wednesday.

These specialist contractors, with the appropriate PPE will empty each bin into secured, plastic lined trucks with dust suppression measures in place, and then clean the inside and outside of the bin before replacing it on the kerb. To ensure safety for these contractors and the community, air monitoring will be undertaken during the collection period. Traffic management may be in place to restrict traffic in each street while collection is taking place.

For the latest information on the recovery effort please visit newcastle.gov.au/wickhamfire