

# CSI site has huge

## asbestos problem Willowbrook loaded, says official

By **DON GROSS**  
ADVANCE STAFF WRITER

Before the College of Staten Island can convert the old Staten Island Developmental Center site in Willowbrook into its new home, the college will have to cope with a substantial asbestos removal problem, an official of the state agency that supervised the transfer of the site from state to city hands has said.

The Office of General Services official, who asked not to be identified, said the buildings would have to be gutted in order to safely remove the asbestos before they were bulldozed or renovated to become the new home of the College of Staten Island.

The official said he didn't know how much asbestos was involved but judged it to be considerable. He based his conclusions on the

age of the buildings, most of which were built prior to World War II. "In any building constructed before 1965 you would have to assume they used a fair amount of asbestos for insulation of pipes and that kind of thing," he said.

What makes asbestos an especially sticky problem at the 300-acre site, he said, is the fact not all of the problem is on the surface. A complex network of tunnels runs beneath the ground connecting the buildings. The tunnels were constructed to carry steam to the different buildings. The source said he's sure there must be asbestos in the tunnels, too.

He said "encapsulating" the asbestos, a technique that would prevent the asbestos particles from floating free in the air, probably would not be feasible in this case because of the age of the buildings, their poor condition and the degree of work that will have to be performed at the site.

Asbestos is known to be highly hazardous, if taken into the lungs

with even small amounts it can cause cancer or asbestosis, a lung disease common to persons exposed to the substance.

Spokeswomen for CSI, Rosemarie Dressler, and the City University of New York, Rita Rodin, have acknowledged asbestos will have to be removed from the site. They denied rumors that the asbestos will be buried rather than removed.

Both said no data is available on how much asbestos will have to be removed or the cost of the removal. Ms. Rodin said specifications on bids for the removal are being drawn but that no completion date had been set on this work.

According to Ms. Dressler, the college won't be able to complete specifications on the bid until they know how much money is being allocated for consolidation of CSI's St. George and Sunnyside campuses in the state's new budget.

CSI, early reports said, was expected to get \$235 million out of the state's allocation to the city university system. However, until the budget is finally passed, the figure remains speculative.