

Asbestos find closes theatre indefinitely

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THE Civic Theatre in Ayr is to remain closed indefinitely, and staff are likely to be given health checks, after crumbling asbestos was found under the stage.

The 345-seat converted church, which is used by South Ayrshire Youth Theatre and

numerous other community groups, was shut down earlier this month to allow a full assessment of the problem.

Both white chrysotile and brown amosite asbestos have been identified in the theatre. White asbestos is linked to lung cancer, while the rarer, more dangerous brown asbestos is associated with mesothelioma.

It is understood staff who

worked at the council-run building are to be contacted for health screening.

A report going before South Ayrshire Council next week says many areas of asbestos in the theatre pose no immediate threat.

However "asbestos beneath the stage and under the building area is . . . in a friable and dangerous condition." The financial implications are still unknown.

Derek Cunningham, the council's head of enterprise, tourism and leisure, said a preliminary investigation had not recommended that the theatre should close. That decision was urged by the local councillors.

He said: "Asbestos in a friable (crumbly) condition is a concern to people. I understand people were being contacted to undergo health screening."