

Asbestos Awareness

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Asbestos is a naturally occurring mineral fiber. Decades ago, it was used in numerous building materials and vehicle products. Today it is used far less. The most significant hazard relates to the demolition and deterioration of materials containing asbestos, which could lead to inhalation and potential serious health hazards.

Sources of Asbestos

The following materials are presumed to contain asbestos if they were installed before 1981:

- Thermal system insulation
- Roofing and siding shingles
- Vinyl floor tiles
- Plaster, cement, putties, and caulk
- Ceiling tiles and spray-on coatings
- Industrial pipe wrapping
- Heat-resistant textiles
- Automobile brake linings and clutch pads

Health Effects

- Short-term health effects include eye, skin, and respiratory irritation.
- Long-term health effects are a much greater concern. They can take as long as 30 years to manifest and may include the following:
 - Lung cancer
 - Mesothelioma (a rare cancer, specific to asbestos)
 - Asbestosis (asbestos deposits in the lungs)
 - Breathing difficulties
 - Interstitial fibrosis (scarring of the lungs)

Safe Work Practices

Access to areas containing intact asbestos:

Do not work around asbestos-containing materials (ACM) unless the following conditions are met:

- The ACM is intact, enclosed, or encapsulated with no likely exposure to asbestos.
- Your work in the area is essential (such as housekeeping or HVAC work in boiler rooms).
- You have completed asbestos awareness training.
- You are able to avoid damaging any ACM.
- Your work is restricted in these areas to the greatest extent possible.

Access to areas containing damaged asbestos:

Do not work with or around damaged or deteriorated ACM unless you are certified to do so.

The work of remodeling, repairing, or demolishing asbestos-containing areas is restricted to contractors certified in asbestos abatement.

Hygiene practices:

- Use proper HEPA-filtered vacuum systems to clean up any dust which may contain asbestos in asbestos-regulated areas; avoid all dry sweeping and the use of compressed air.
- Use good personal hygiene, including good hand washing practices after working in an asbestos-restricted area prior to eating, drinking, smoking, chewing tobacco or gum, or applying cosmetics. Also, never do these activities while in an asbestos-restricted area.

