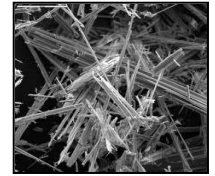


# Asbestos: Information for Housekeeping & Maintenance Personnel



Asbestos is a **naturally occurring fibrous mineral**.

Asbestos is actually a name for a **group** of minerals with special characteristics that make it very useful because of its strength and resistance to fire and most chemicals. Based upon its useful characteristics asbestos was used in many building products in the United States from 1880 to about 1980.

## Where is asbestos found in buildings?

*Asbestos is found in many common building materials such as:*

Fire retardants	Pipe insulation*	Boiler jacketing
Electrical insulation	Plaster	Sheet rock & wall board*
Joint compound	Joint tape	Carpeting glues (or mastics)
Cement boards	Siding	Vinyl flooring*
Thermal insulation	Ceiling tiles	Roof flashing & other roofing materials



*\* Pictured*

## What's the problem with asbestos?

Asbestos would be ***the ideal*** building material if it were not the cause of multiple diseases. Few immediate health effects are associated with asbestos exposure; most asbestos related diseases manifest many years after exposure (15 to 40 years). The most serious diseases occur when asbestos fibers get into the air and are inhaled. Asbestos related diseases include **asbestosis** (the scarring of the lungs by the fibers), **lung cancer** and **mesothelioma** (a cancer of the lining around the lungs, heart and GI tract which is almost always fatal).

## Is it safe if asbestos is in the area where I work?

If asbestos is managed properly it is safe to work in areas with asbestos containing materials (ACM). The primary concern with asbestos is when it gets into the air and is inhaled. Asbestos is the most dangerous when it is **"friable"**; or when it can be crushed or pulverized with hand pressure. Most asbestos containing materials, when in good condition and are left undisturbed, are **not** friable. **Any activity that can disturb ACM is forbidden by law unless performed by properly equipped personnel that are licensed by the NYS Department of Health.**

**NEVER DISTURB ASEBESTOS!**

Asbestos materials can not be cut, sanded or drilled into unless proper containment is set-up and workers are properly licensed.

It is forbidden to clean asbestos debris using compressed air, dry-sweeping or using a regular vacuum.

## How do I know if I am exposed to asbestos where I work?

**Microscopic analysis** is the only way to determine if asbestos is present in building materials. Prudent practice assumes that any building material in buildings constructed prior to 1980 other than wood, metal or glass contains asbestos. Asbestos was used in construction well after 1980 **and** it is still used in some building materials made today. Only with laboratory analysis can a building owner be sure.

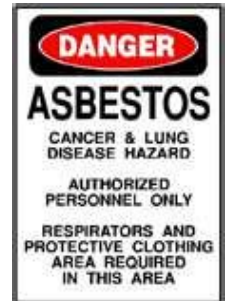
## Housekeeping and maintenance workers who work in areas that contain asbestos **MUST** be trained on:

- The **health effects** of asbestos
- The **presence and location** of asbestos containing materials OR presumed asbestos containing materials.
- How to **recognize** if asbestos containing materials have been **damaged or are deteriorating**.
- You must be **trained EVERY year**.

*\*Your employer must have records documenting what building materials contain, or presumed to contain asbestos. Those materials have to be labeled or have warning signs posted AND workers who are likely to disturb those materials must be trained.*

The New York State Department of Labor (NYS DOL) Public Employee Safety and Health (PESH) Bureau's asbestos regulation requires building owners to determine the **presence, location and quantity** of asbestos containing materials (**ACMs**) and presumed asbestos containing materials (**PACMS**) at the work site.

The regulations only consider materials to be ACMs if they contain more than 1% asbestos. The ACMs and PACMs **must be labeled** where it is practical to do so. In areas such as mechanical rooms that have ACMs a sign must be posted. Employers are also required to have a Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) for every ACM and PACM.



## Is it safe for me to be in the building when asbestos is being removed?



If the building owner follows all rules and regulations, it is safe to be in a building during asbestos removal. NYS Industrial Code Rule (ICR) 56 covers asbestos removal. Projects performed according to this regulation will prevent the release of asbestos fibers into the air outside the work enclosure. Building owners are required to **contain** the area, provide for **decontamination**. For large projects **air sampling** is required both inside and outside of the project area.

## What are some reliable on-line resources for asbestos?

- New York State Department of Labor Asbestos Control Bureau Page:  
[http://www.labor.ny.gov/workerprotection/safetyhealth/dosh\\_asbestos.shtm](http://www.labor.ny.gov/workerprotection/safetyhealth/dosh_asbestos.shtm)
- Occupational Safety and Health Administration's Asbestos Information Page:  
<http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/asbestos/index.html>
- National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health's Asbestos Information Page:  
<http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/asbestos/>
- Agency for Toxic Substance and Disease Registry's Asbestos Information Page:  
<http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/asbestos/>
- CSEA Occupational Safety and Health Web Page:  
<http://www.csealocal1000.org/osh.php>