



Asbestos

Asbestos is a mineral fiber that commonly was used in a variety of building construction materials for insulation and as a fire retardant. The most dangerous asbestos fibers are too small to see. They can become airborne when asbestos-containing materials are disturbed or during improper removal. If they are inhaled, these harmful fibers can remain and accumulate in the lungs.

Where Is It Found?

Any products made that contain asbestos must be labeled clearly. Building products and insulation materials made before the 1970s containing asbestos include:

- pipe and furnace insulation materials
- asbestos and cement shingles, siding and roofing
- millboard
- resilient floor tiles, the backing on vinyl sheet flooring, floor tile adhesives soundproofing or decorative material
- patching and joint compound
- fireproof gloves and stove-top pads
- automobile brake pads and linings, clutch facings, gaskets

Does It Contain Asbestos?

If it is not labeled, materials suspected of containing asbestos must be sampled and analyzed by a qualified professional. Until the results are known, treat the material as if it contains asbestos. If unprofessionally done, extracting samples can be hazardous.

Proper Repair and Removal

If the asbestos material is more than slightly damaged, or you are doing work that might disturb the asbestos, contact a professional for the repairs or removal.

What Are the Health Effects?

Breathing high levels of asbestos fibers can lead to an increased risk of:

- lung cancer
- mesothelioma (a cancer of the chest and abdominal linings)
- asbestosis (irreversible lung scarring that can be fatal)

The risk of lung cancer is also greater among people who smoke. Symptoms of these diseases do not appear until many years after the exposure begins. Most people with asbestos-related diseases were exposed to elevated concentrations of the fibers while on the job.

Live and Let Be

- Because material in good condition will not release asbestos fibers, it is best to leave it alone.
- Try to prevent the material from being damaged, disturbed or touched.
- Periodically inspect the material for damage or deterioration.
- Properly dispose of damaged or worn asbestos items.
- Check with officials on how to handle and dispose of materials used in asbestos removal properly.

Source: National Safety Council

Safety tips developed based on generally accepted safety standards believed to be reliable at the date of publication. Information is for general guidance only and should not be relied upon for legal compliance purposes.

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