



ASBESTOS AWARENESS

A 5-Minute Safety Talk

Learn how to identify, avoid, and report asbestos to protect yourself and others.

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Many employees work in buildings that were constructed before asbestos regulations significantly restricted its use. Custodial staff, maintenance personnel, administrative employees, and other building occupants may encounter materials that contain asbestos during their normal work activities.

While asbestos-containing materials (ACMs) generally do not present a hazard when left undisturbed and in good condition, they can become dangerous when damaged or disturbed.

POTENTIAL LOCATIONS

In buildings constructed before the 1980s, asbestos may be present in a variety of building materials, including:

- 9-inch by 9-inch vinyl floor tiles and the adhesive (mastic) beneath them.
- Textured ceiling finishes, including acoustic and “popcorn” ceilings.
- Pipe insulation, boiler insulation, and thermal system insulation.
- Drywall joint compound, plaster, and cement board products.
- Roofing materials, siding panels, and other building products.
- Keep the load close to your body. Lift and carry the object near your waist for greater strength and stability.

REMEMBER: You cannot determine whether a material contains asbestos simply by looking at it. Materials must be evaluated through building records or laboratory analysis.

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GOLDEN RULES FOR ASBESTOS SAFETY

Follow these important safety practices whenever you encounter suspected asbestos-containing materials:

- **Do Not Disturb** – Never drill, cut, sand, scrape, hammer, or otherwise disturb materials that may contain asbestos.
- **Do Not Clean Up Suspected Asbestos Debris** – Never dry sweep, vacuum, or shovel dust or debris that could contain asbestos. Improper cleanup can release fibers into the air.
- **Stop and Report** – If you discover damaged ceiling material, deteriorated pipe insulation, broken floor tile, or any other suspect material, stop work immediately.
- **Restrict Access** – Keep others away from the area whenever possible until it can be evaluated.
- **Notify Your Supervisor** – Report the condition immediately to your supervisor, Facilities Services, or Environment, Health & Safety.

HEALTH RISKS

When asbestos-containing materials are damaged, disturbed, drilled, sanded, cut, or broken, microscopic fibers may be released into the air. These fibers can be inhaled and become trapped in the lungs.

Exposure to asbestos fibers has been linked to serious diseases, including:

- Asbestosis (scarring of lung tissue).
- Lung cancer.
- Mesothelioma, a rare and aggressive cancer affecting the lining of the lungs and other organs.

These diseases often take many years or even decades to develop. Preventing exposure today helps protect your long-term health.

ASBESTOS SAFETY ESSENTIALS

Most asbestos-containing materials can be safely managed when they remain intact and undisturbed. Your responsibility is simple: recognize potential asbestos-containing materials, avoid disturbing them, and report damaged or deteriorated materials immediately. Never attempt to remove or clean up suspected asbestos yourself unless you are specifically trained, authorized, and equipped to perform asbestos-related work.