



MAFES Dawg Tracks

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Asbestos Awareness



Asbestos is a serious health hazard commonly found in our environment today. It is important for employees who may work in buildings that contain asbestos to know where it is likely to be found and how to avoid exposure.

WHAT IS ASBESTOS?

Asbestos is the name applied to six naturally occurring minerals that are mined from the earth. The different types are:

Amosite - Chrysolite - Tremolite - Actinolite - Anthophyllite - Crocidolite. The three most commonly used are: **Chrysolite (color - white)** the most commonly used, **Amosite (color-brown)** or **Crocidolite (color - blue)**.

All types of asbestos tend to break into tiny fibers. These individual fibers are so small that you have to view them with a microscope. Some are so small that they are 700 times smaller than human hair. Because of their size, when they are released into the air they can remain airborne for hours or even days.

Asbestos fibers are virtually indestructible, resistant to chemicals and heat, and are very stable in the environment. Asbestos is said to be the best insulator to man. Due to all of its properties, it has been used in over 3,000 different products. Asbestos is mixed with other materials to actually form the products such as floor tiles, roof shingles. Depending upon the type of product is to what percentage of asbestos will be used in the end product. It can be 1-100 percent. A material that contains 1 percent asbestos containing materials (ACM) is considered to be asbestos.

WHERE IS ASBESTOS FOUND?

It can be found in many different products and many different places. Some examples of products that might contain asbestos are:

- Sprayed-on fireproofing and insulation in buildings
- Insulation for pipes and boilers
- Wall and ceiling insulation
- Ceiling tiles and floor tiles
- Putties, caulks and cements
- Siding shingles in older homes
- Wall & Ceiling textures
- Brake linings
- Joint compound in old buildings and homes
- Roofing shingles

WHEN IS ASBESTOS DANGEROUS?

The most common way for asbestos fibers to enter the body is through breathing. Asbestos is not considered to be dangerous unless it is releasing the dust or fibers into the air where they can be inhaled or ingested. Asbestos is most hazardous when it is "friable." Friable means that the asbestos can be crumbled by hand, releasing fibers into the air. Sprayed-on asbestos is highly friable. Asbestos floor tiles are not. Floor tiles, ceiling tiles, shingles, siding shingles and fire doors will not release asbestos fibers unless they are disturbed or damaged in some way. If an asbestos ceiling tile is drilled or broken, it may release fibers into the air. But left alone and not disturbed it won't. Damage and deterioration will increase the friability of asbestos contained materials.

HOW TO AVOID ASBESTOS EXPOSURE-

To avoid being exposed to asbestos-contained materials you must be aware of the locations that it is likely to be found. If you don't know if a material is asbestos or not, assume that it is and stay away until it has been identified. Remember that you cannot tell if floor or ceiling tile is asbestos simply by looking at it.

HEALTH EFFECTS-

Because it is so hard to destroy asbestos fibers, the body cannot break them down or remove them once they are lodged in the lung or body tissues. They remain in place where they can cause disease.

There are three primary diseases associated with asbestos exposure: **Asbestosis - Lung Cancer - Mesothelioma**

Asbestosis is a serious, chronic, non-cancerous respiratory disease. Inhaled asbestos fibers aggravate lung tissues, causing them to scar. The symptoms of asbestosis are shortness of breath and a dry cracking sound in the lungs while inhaling. In advanced stages, it can cause cardiac failure. There is no effective treatment for this disease. It is usually disabling or fatal. If you do not work with asbestosis, the chance of getting the diseases is very minimal. If you work in removing or demolishing buildings that contain asbestos, you may be at a significant risk. The latency period (time between exposure and the development of symptoms of the disease) is 15-30 years.

Lung Cancer - Lung cancer causes the largest number of deaths related to asbestos exposure. The incidence of lung cancer in people who are directly involved in mining, milling, manufacturing and use of asbestos products is much higher than in the general population. The most common symptoms of lung cancer are coughing and a change in breathing. Other symptoms are shortness of breath, persistent chest pains, and hoarseness, and anemia. People who are exposed to a lot to asbestos and to other carcinogens--like cigarettes are likely to get lung cancer. The time of the latency period is about 20- to 30 years.

Mesothelioma - This is a rare form of cancer that usually occurs in the lungs, chest, and abdomen and rarely in the heart. Most all cases are linked to the exposure to asbestos. People who work in asbestos mines, asbestos factories and worked all day in asbestos are more prone to contract the disease than those that don't. Mesothelioma spreads very fast and is almost always fatal. The latency period for this disease is 30 years,

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