

HAZARD ALERT

CPWR 
THE CENTER FOR CONSTRUCTION
RESEARCH AND TRAINING

ASBESTOS

ASBESTOS FIBERS ARE A HAZARD



Is asbestos still a hazard?

The answer is YES. Asbestos is banned in many products. However, it is still found in some new and older construction materials uncovered during renovation and demolition work, including:¹

- ▶ Roofing and insulation materials
- ▶ Plaster
- ▶ Cement
- ▶ Caulk
- ▶ Ceiling tiles
- ▶ Spray coatings
- ▶ Vinyl floor tiles
- ▶ Industrial pipe wrapping products
- ▶ Heat-resistant materials²

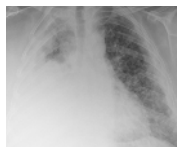
Materials that contain a small amount of asbestos – less than 1% – do not have to be labeled as containing asbestos, according to OSHA.³

Why is it dangerous?

According to OSHA, breathing in asbestos fibers can make you sick. The asbestos fibers that are the most dangerous are the ones you cannot see. When these fibers get into your lungs or digestive tract they can lead to serious diseases, including.*

- ▶ **Asbestosis**, a scarring of the lungs that makes it difficult to breathe.
- ▶ **Lung cancer**; or
- ▶ **Mesothelioma**, a rare and deadly cancer that forms in the chest or stomach.

These diseases can take many years to show up. Thousands of construction workers have died from breathing in asbestos and thousands more are at risk. You may be at risk.



Chest x-ray showing severe mesothelioma (in white)

¹ The EPA has a list of asbestos-containing materials that are not banned:

<https://www.epa.gov/asbestos/us-federal-bans-asbestos>

² OSHA Asbestos Fact Sheet: <https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3507.pdf>

³ The OSHA Asbestos Standard for Construction (29 CFR 1926.1101), states that,

"Asbestos-containing material" (ACM), means any material containing more than one percent asbestos.

*CDC Asbestos Facts: http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/asbestos/asbestos/health_effects/

If you think you are in danger:

Contact your supervisor. Contact your union.

Call OSHA 1-800-321-6742

Before Beginning Work:

1 Ask your employer...

Do the materials that will be installed, demolished, or repaired contain asbestos? If the answer is yes, your employer must:

- ▶ Provide training;
- ▶ Provide personal protective equipment, including appropriate respirators and clothing; and
- ▶ Place warning signs in areas where there is the risk for exposure.

Your employer must also take steps to prevent others working nearby and the public from exposure to asbestos.



Photo Courtesy of the Hazardous Waste Operations and Emergency Response (HAZWOPER) Training Program

2 Protect yourself and others...

- ▶ Use the respirators, overalls, head coverings, gloves, and foot coverings provided by your employer. Your employer must have a respiratory protection program.*
- ▶ Never smoke, eat, or drink in areas marked with an **asbestos warning sign**.
- ▶ If you smoke, quit. Both asbestos and smoking can cause lung cancer.
- ▶ If you do asbestos abatement work, shower before you leave work.
- ▶ Do not take asbestos home with you. Leave your work clothes and shoes at work. Do not bring them home to wash.

*OSHA's Respiratory Protection Standard (29 CFR 1910.134 and 29 CFR 1926.103)

3 Get trained...

There are three different types of asbestos training. The one you are required to take depends on the type of work you do.

- ▶ **Awareness Training**
Basic training for workers who might come in contact with asbestos while doing minor cleaning and maintenance work.
- ▶ **Special Operations and Maintenance Training**
Training for workers who repair materials known to contain asbestos, in addition to minor cleaning and maintenance work.
- ▶ **Abatement Worker Training**
In-depth training for workers who remove asbestos and come into direct contact with the fibers.*

*<https://www.epa.gov/asbestos/training>

Learn more about how to protect yourself from asbestos.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA)



The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH)

