



ASBESTOS EMERGENCY TIPS

Asbestos is a generic term for a group of minerals known for their strength, flame and heat resistance, and seemingly indestructible qualities. Once considered a “miracle mineral”, asbestos was used for many years in building construction. It can be found in many forms and places. Asbestos was used in boiler and pipe insulation, plasters, floor, tile, electrical insulation, and as a fireproofing material on structural members in buildings. It has also been sprayed on ceilings and walls as acoustic insulation.

Because of its indestructible qualities, asbestos is harmful to the human body. The body cannot digest, break down, or change asbestos; it can only attempt to encapsulate it with scar tissue. Several types of asbestos were banned in the 1970's due to the concern over the health effects (especially cancer) associated with exposure to such materials. It is important to remember that asbestos generally has been found to be hazardous to humans only when it is inhaled into the lungs. From studies of people who were exposed to asbestos in factories and shipyards, we know that breathing high levels of asbestos fibers can lead to an increased risk of:

- **Lung Cancer**
- **Mesothelioma**, a cancer of the lining of the chest & abdominal cavity
- **Asbestosis**, in which the lungs become scarred with fibrous tissue

Asbestos occurs naturally as a fiber; individual fibers are so small they are invisible to the naked eye. Most asbestos is not hazardous in its original, undisturbed state; only when it is disturbed does it release asbestos fibers. Symptoms of asbestos-related diseases do not occur soon after exposure. Those who are sick today because of asbestos may have been exposed 20-40 years ago. Controlling exposures now will prevent disease and suffering decades later.

Asbestos is abated only when required for renovation, remodeling or maintenance. This usually involves moving ceiling tile, repairing plumbing or anything else containing asbestos. During asbestos remediation, emergency abatement is conducted when asbestos has been accidentally disturbed— usually because of water leaks involving contaminated ceiling tile. Not every pipe and ceiling tile contains asbestos, but whether it does or not cannot be determined at a glance. If you suspect that any of these materials contain asbestos call to have them tested. The removal of asbestos needs to be done by an approved Asbestos Abatement Contractor.



Here is an excerpt from the
**American Lung Association–
Consumer Product Safety Commission**

Do's and Don'ts:

- ❖ **DO** keep activities to a minimum in any areas having damaged material that may contain asbestos.
- ❖ **DO** take every precaution to avoid damaging asbestos material.
- ❖ **DO** have removal and major repair done by people trained and qualified in handling asbestos. It is highly recommended that sampling and minor repairs also be done by asbestos professionals.
- ❖ **DON'T** dust, sweep, or vacuum debris that may contain asbestos.
- ❖ **DON'T** saw, sand, scrape, or drill holes in asbestos materials.
- ❖ **DON'T** use abrasive pads or brushes on power strippers to strip wax from asbestos flooring or its' backing. Never use a power stripper on a dry floor.
- ❖ **DON'T** sand or try to level asbestos flooring or its' backing. When asbestos flooring needs replacing, install new floor covering over it, if possible.
- ❖ **DON'T** track material that could contain asbestos through the house. If the material is from a damaged area, or if a large area must be cleaned, call an asbestos professional.