

Asbestos Safety

Asbestos is a hazardous mineral that can severely damage your lungs and even kill you. Thousands of construction workers have died from diseases caused by working with or near asbestos without proper protection. Asbestos diseases can sometimes take 20 years or longer to show up after you've been exposed.



Many uses of asbestos have been banned. However, it's still used in construction, mainly in roof panels, vinyl flooring and packing gaskets. It can also be found in old fireproofing, wallboard, waste tank linings, pipe and boiler insulation, and some cement and road surfaces. All

kinds of asbestos are dangerous. The construction trades most at risk from asbestos are insulators, plumbers, pipefitters, bricklayers, roofers,

electricians and sheet metal workers. But any construction worker may be in danger during maintenance, remodeling or demolition of an old building or road.

The Hazards

Some asbestos fibers are so small you can't see them. These are very dangerous because they can easily get into your lungs. Asbestos can cause asbestosis, which scars your lungs and makes it hard to breathe. You can also get lung cancer or mesothelioma, a cancer of the lining of the chest or stomach. All kinds of asbestos can give you these diseases, including chrysotile asbestos. The more you're exposed to asbestos, the greater chance you'll get sick. If you smoke, your chances of developing lung cancer from asbestos exposure double.

PROTECT YOURSELF

- ◆ Before you work with or around asbestos you must receive special training.
- ◆ If you disturb or remove asbestos, you must wear a respirator with at least type 100 HEPA cartridges. These cartridges are magenta (red-purple) in color.
- ◆ Even though you're wearing a respirator, try to reduce the asbestos in the air by keeping it wet and by vacuuming the dust using a special HEPA vacuum designed to capture the smallest fibers.
- ◆ Collect and close all asbestos waste in specially approved removal bags.
- ◆ Never eat, drink or smoke in a work area with asbestos.
- ◆ Always wash your hands and face before you eat, drink, smoke or use the bathroom.
- ◆ Never wear or take asbestos contaminated clothing or shoes home. Use disposable clothing or launder your clothing at work.
- ◆ If you do certain asbestos abatement work, OSHA requires that you shower before leaving work.
- ◆ If you've been exposed to asbestos on the job, report it to your supervisor.