

## Asbestos in New Materials

Asbestos is still legal in the US though it is no longer mined here. About half of the imported ACMs are used in roofing products. Eastern requests an asbestos free declaration for all new building materials installed on campus.

## Health Hazards

Asbestos is an excellent building material but it has the potential to cause serious health problems if the fibers are inhaled. Intact, undisturbed ACMs do not pose a significant health risk, however if it is damaged and the fibers become airborne it can cause problems.

The three illnesses most commonly associated with asbestos exposure are asbestosis (non-cancerous, scarring of lung tissue), lung cancer and mesothelioma (rare form of cancer which affects the lining of the lungs). Most asbestos related diseases have been found in workers who held jobs where workers were exposed to very high levels of asbestos on a routine basis. Regardless, appropriate measures should be taken to minimize exposure.

## Smoking & Asbestos

Studies show that smokers who are exposed to asbestos increase the likelihood of lung cancer up to 90 times that of a non-exposed, non-smoker. In contrast, non-smokers who are exposed to asbestos increase their likelihood of lung cancer by five times.



## Damaged Building Materials

If you encounter damaged building materials, immediately contact the Work Order Desk (x2245) to let them know.

Remember that it is impossible to determine if a material contains asbestos by visual inspection alone, treat damaged building materials as suspect until a qualified individual has confirmed the absence of asbestos.



Advertisement for asbestos containing wire.

If you have questions about materials in your building, contact EH&S. We may have information from prior sampling projects.

## Environmental Health & Safety

002 Martin Hall, Cheney WA 99004

P: 509.359.6496 | F: 509.359.4690

sites.ewu.edu/ehs

# ASBESTOS AWARENESS



Environmental Health & Safety



Surveys conducted by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) estimate that there are asbestos-containing materials in about 31,000 schools and 733,000 other buildings in the US.

Asbestos is potentially harmful to health and found in many places. Everyone should be aware of the hazards associated with asbestos and the measures that will help protect themselves and others from harm. This brochure is intended to provide EWU employees and students with basic information about asbestos safety.

## Asbestos

The term "asbestos" refers to a specific group of naturally occurring fibrous minerals found in some rock formations. Asbestos is mined like other minerals.

There are many types of asbestos; the three most common are chrysotile, amosite, and crocidolite.



asbestos rock

Asbestos became popular because it is a relatively inexpensive, virtually indestructible material. It is fire and chemical resistant, is capable of insulating thermal and electrical systems, it is strong, flexible, and long-lasting.

Asbestos has been added to more than 3,000 building products. The amount of asbestos in these products varies widely from less than 1% to nearly 100%. Any material with at least 1% asbestos is considered to be an asbestos-containing material (ACM). The presence of asbestos in a material is determined by laboratory analysis. Until a material is tested it should be assumed to contain asbestos.

## Asbestos Management

The Asbestos Management Program emphasizes in-place management of ACMs because intact and undisturbed asbestos materials do not pose a significant health risk. However, there are times when maintenance or construction will disturb ACMs. These activities can only be performed by authorized staff who have received asbestos management and abatement training.

All activities that involve disturbing ACM are done in accordance with rules and regulations that protect the worker and building occupants. When asbestos must be removed it is done only with personnel who have been accredited by the state of Washington.

Areas where asbestos will be disturbed will have protective barriers in place and warning signs posted.

## Renovations

Prior to any renovation or asbestos abatement project, the area to be disturbed must first be inspected to identify any ACMs present. If asbestos is identified, an EPA accredited designer will need to design the abatement project to assure it complies with all health and safety rules and regulations. Permits must be obtained from the state and building occupants will be notified of what will be done and when it will happen.



## Recognition of Damage

ACM on campus is periodically inspected by accredited personnel. However, it is very important that you know how to recognize damaged material and how to report it. This will ensure any issues are addressed in a timely manner minimizing the risk of exposure to you and other building occupants.

When dealing with asbestos the degree of friability will determine how easily a material can be damaged. Friability is the ease with which asbestos-containing material can be crumbled, pulverized, or reduced to powder by hand pressure. The more friable a material is the more likely it is to become airborne.

Ceiling material and fireproofing are friable as they can be easily damaged. Floor tiles, on the other hand, are non-friable as it takes quite a bit of effort to damage them.

Damage to ACM can be in several forms including:

- ⇒ Water damage (look for characteristic water rings)
- ⇒ Delamination (material has pulled away from the surface or layers are separating)
- ⇒ General deterioration (aging)
- ⇒ Physical damage (gouge marks, broken tiles, etc.)

You should immediately report any damaged building materials to the work order desk (x2245) or EH&S (x6496) and also to your supervisor.