

# ASBESTOS

## IDENTIFY

Asbestos is a fibre that was used in many building materials up until the 1980s. Some products that are installed today still contain asbestos.

Breathing in asbestos fibres can cause serious health problems:

- Asbestosis (scarring of the lungs making it difficult to breathe)
- Lung cancer
- Mesothelioma (cancer in the lining of the chest and/or abdomen)

In Type 1 operations, the risk of asbestos exposure to workers is low if specific procedures are followed.

Asbestos-containing materials in Type 1 operations are non-friable. The fibres in the material are locked in by cement, vinyl, or another binding agent. However, cutting, grinding, abrading, sanding, breaking, drilling, or vibrating the material may be enough to release the fibres.

Some common types of non-friable asbestos-containing materials include:

- Gaskets
- Asbestos cement
- Vinyl tiles and acoustical plaster and tiles
- Roofing felts
- Drywall joint-filling compounds

In Type 2 operations, the risk of asbestos exposure to workers is medium. Since exposure is likely to occur, precautions must be taken.

Asbestos-containing materials (ACM) can be “friable” or “non-friable.”

- **Friable ACM** is easily crumbled or pulverized with the fingers.
- **Non-friable ACM** is held together by some type of binding agent.

## COMMUNICATE AND CONTROL

An inventory list must be developed and kept on site of all asbestos-containing materials in the workplace. An employer must ensure that any worker who will be, or may be exposed to, asbestos-containing materials is trained in the hazards of

asbestos, identifying the materials containing asbestos, the use of appropriate PPE, and monitoring the health after being exposed to asbestos.

### TYPE 1 – Low Risk

- Before beginning work, use a damp cloth or HEPA vacuum to clean up any visible dust.
- Use a HEPA vacuum or damp mop to clean up asbestos dust and waste on a regular basis so it doesn't build up.
- Take steps to control the spread of dust to other work areas. Use drop sheets or other suitable material.
- Wet drop sheets and dispose of them immediately after clean-up.
- Dispose of all asbestos waste and coveralls in suitable, dust-tight containers labeled with warning signs. Remove waste from the workplace frequently.
- Rigid barriers or portable enclosures must be damp wiped or HEPA vacuumed. Otherwise, do not reuse them. Never reuse drop sheets.
- Never use compressed air to clean the work area.
- For non-friable asbestos, wet the material using a wetting agent and only use non-powered hand tools.
- Don't eat, drink, chew gum, or smoke in areas where asbestos could be present.
- Although the risk of exposure to asbestos is low for Type 1 operations, you may choose to use a respirator and protective clothing.
- All personal protective equipment such as respirators or protective coveralls must be damp wiped or HEPA vacuumed before leaving the work area.
- Always wash your face and hands before leaving the work area.
- Restrict access to the work area where asbestos work is being done.

## COMMUNICATE AND CONTROL

### TYPE 2 – Medium Risk

- Before the work begins, wet the ACM using a wetting agent if safe to do so.
- Disposable coveralls must be worn. Keep the wrists, ankles, and neck snug to prevent entry of dust. If your coveralls tear, replace them immediately.
- A NIOSH-approved respirator must be used when working in the area.
- Use rubber boots to keep dust out.
- Use a HEPA vacuum or damp mop to clean up asbestos dust and waste on a regular basis so it doesn't build up.
- Do not allow workers without adequate personal protective equipment into the work area. Ensure warning signs are in place.
- An enclosure must be set up if you intend on removing a false ceiling if ACM is likely to be lying on the surface.
- If you disturb less than 1m<sup>2</sup> of friable asbestos, it must be done inside an enclosure. If more than 1m<sup>2</sup>, this may be considered a Type 3 asbestos operation.
- Place asbestos waste, disposable clothing, enclosures, barrier materials, and other contaminated items into a labeled dust-tight container. Damp wipe or HEPA vacuum the waste containers before removing them from the work area.
- All personal protective equipment such as respirators or protective coveralls must be damp wiped or HEPA vacuumed before leaving the work area.
- Never reuse drop sheets.
- Never use compressed air to clean the work area.
- Don't eat, drink, chew gum, or smoke in areas where asbestos could be present.
- Always wash your face and hands before leaving the work area.

**Legislation** – further clarification can be found in the Workplace Safety and Health (WSH) Regulation Part 37.

## THE QUIZ

1. What does the abbreviation ACM stand for?  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. The appropriate WSH Regulation is which Part?

- a) Part 34
- b) Part 35
- c) Part 36
- d) Part 37

3. Type 1 asbestos operations are which type of risk?  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. Appropriate personal protective equipment must never be worn while dealing with asbestos:

TRUE \_\_\_\_\_ FALSE \_\_\_\_\_

5. Who is responsible to ensure workers are trained in regards to dealing with asbestos?

- a) The employer
- b) The supervisor
- c) The safety committee
- d) All of the above

1. Asbestos containing materials; 2. d; 3. Low risk;  
4. FALSE; 5. a

**ANSWERS:**