

ASBESTOS

Asbestos is a generic term referring to a family of naturally occurring silicate minerals with a fibrous structure. Types of asbestos fibers most commonly used in commercial products are Chrysotile, Amosite and Crocidolite with other forms being less common.

Asbestos is known to pose human health hazards. Inhalation into the lungs is the main route of entry into the body for asbestos fibers. Prolonged exposure to elevated amounts of airborne asbestos fibers can result in a fibrotic lung disease, Asbestosis. In addition, epidemiologic studies have found that asbestos exposure causes more serious health effects, including lung cancer, mesothelioma, which is a cancer of the lining of the lungs and abdominal cavity, and is implicated in some cancers of the digestive tract.

In recognition of these health hazards, agencies of the Federal and State Government have established limits of permissible exposure to asbestos fibers: the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) for industrial and construction exposures, and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for community air quality.

Current OSHA Regulations have a Permissible Exposure Level (PEL) of 0.1 f/cc (fibers per cubic centimeter) for employees working with or around Asbestos Containing Building Materials (ACBM). The OSHA regulations divide work with ACBM into four classes:

Class I: Removal of High risk ACM. All workers must have at least the three day Asbestos Worker Training and Certification. Work must be done under the direct supervision of a person with the Asbestos Supervisor Training and Certification.

Class II: Removal of non high risk ACBM. All workers must have at least the three day Asbestos Worker Training and Certification. The supervisor with Asbestos Supervisor Training and Certification must inspect the site at frequent intervals and at employee request.

Class III: Repair and maintenance activities where ACBM will be disturbed. All workers need sixteen hour training and need to be supervised by a person with Asbestos Supervisor Training and Certification who inspects the site at sufficient intervals and at employee request.

Class IV: Maintenance and custodial work where employees contact ACBM or the cleanup of ACBM waste and debris. All workers must have two hour awareness training and be supervised by a person with Asbestos Supervisor Training and Certification who makes frequent and regular inspections.

On the UIUC campus, all removal, maintenance, repair and cleanup of ACBM is to be done by workers with Asbestos Worker Training and Certification with supervision by a person with Asbestos Supervisor Training and Certification. Non certified employees should notify their immediate supervisor if there is any ACBM in their workplace that will be disturbed in the course of their routine duties. ACBM will be abated in any area where normal employee activities will cause asbestos fiber release.

It is the goal of the University to not only meet mandated permissible exposure levels, but to achieve the lowest practical levels of asbestos fibers in the air.

It is necessary that University employees receive information about the health effects of asbestos exposure, the types and location of Asbestos Containing Building Materials (ACBM) in their workplace. This information should include information about who to contact in case of accidental damage to ACBM. Working in buildings containing ACBM is safe unless the asbestos fibers become air borne. Employees should take care to not disturb ACBM during their normal activities. Information about employee awareness training, the location of asbestos on the University campus or other information about asbestos can be obtained from Safety & Compliance (333-1106) (p-kerst@uiuc.edu).