

What is asbestos?

Asbestos is the common name for a group of naturally occurring mineral fibers that are known for their high tensile strength and thermal insulating properties. It is commonly found in a variety of building construction materials and products. Examples include:

- Heating system insulation
- Spray-applied insulation
- Vinyl floor tiles
- Vinyl sheet flooring
- Ceiling tiles
- Adhesives and construction mastics
- Roofing paper and shingles
- Cement siding shingles
- Plaster and joint compound
- Vermiculite



Vermiculite insulation found in an attic.

Why is asbestos a problem?

When asbestos is disturbed, it can break down into microscopic fibers that may become airborne. Once airborne, these fibers can be inhaled and trapped in the lungs, posing a health threat. Breathing asbestos can cause respiratory diseases including asbestosis, lung cancer, and mesothelioma, a fatal cancer of the chest cavity lining.

How should asbestos be managed to minimize health risks?

The greatest potential for exposure to asbestos fibers now occurs when asbestos-containing building materials are disturbed during either building renovations or demolitions. All building owners – residential and commercial – should be aware of what steps should be taken to properly identify and address asbestos hazards in structures prior to beginning any work that might disturb asbestos-containing materials.

What are the requirements for building renovation and demolition projects?

Inspection

A thorough inspection must be conducted for the presence of asbestos-containing building materials prior to any building renovation or demolition project. The inspection must be conducted by a person accredited in the identification of asbestos-containing building materials.

If asbestos is found during the inspection and will be disturbed during any renovation or repair work, it must be properly removed and disposed of at an approved disposal facility. Likewise, all asbestos must be removed prior to any building demolition project. In most cases, asbestos abatement activities must be performed by a licensed abatement contractor.

Lists of certified asbestos inspectors, licensed abatement contractors, and approved disposal facilities are maintained by the N.H. Department of Environmental Services.

RSA 141-E and the N.H. Code of Administrative Rules establish certain requirements for licensing abatement contractors and to properly address and abate asbestos hazards.

Notification

Each facility owner must provide written notification to the Department of Environmental Services and the local health officer at least ten working days before any building demolition activity occurs. This notification is required for *all building demolition projects*, regardless of the amount of asbestos present, even when no asbestos is present.

For renovation projects, written notification is required at least ten working days prior to any asbestos abatement performed as part of the renovation if the abatement involves greater than 10 linear feet, or 25 square feet of asbestos-containing building material. No notification is required for renovations if the amount of asbestos-containing material is less than this, or if there is no asbestos-containing material present that will be disturbed during the renovation.

A special **Demolition/Renovation Notification Form** must be used for the written notification to the Department of Environmental Services. A fee may be required depending on the amount of asbestos being removed.



Improperly removed asbestos from home renovation project.

What should I do with asbestos in my home?

Many homeowners have asbestos-containing materials in their homes. Although not required by the state, homeowners should have an inspection performed by a qualified asbestos inspector to properly identify these materials. Any asbestos-containing material that is in good condition and will not be disturbed should be left alone.

If these materials are deteriorating, or will be disturbed during renovation or demolition, they must be removed. Homeowners in single family, owner-occupied homes who do the work themselves are exempt from the state inspection and notification requirements, provided they will not be selling the home within six months. However, homeowners are required to package and dispose of the waste materials properly. Homeowners should use extreme caution when dealing with asbestos-containing materials, and should consider using a licensed asbestos abatement contractor for most removal projects.

For More Information

For information on asbestos management and control in New Hampshire:

Asbestos Management & Control Program
Air Resources Division
N.H. Department of Environmental Services
PO Box 95
Concord, NH 03302-0095
(603) 271-1370

www.des.nh.gov (See "Asbestos Management" on the "A to Z LIST.")

For additional information on asbestos and its health impacts:

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
www.epa.gov/asbestos/



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Renovation, Demolition & Asbestos

What Building Owners & Contractors in New Hampshire Should Know



Damaged asbestos pipe insulation.

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