

## Asbestos

Asbestos is a generic term referring to a family of naturally occurring silicate minerals with a fibrous structure. Types of asbestos minerals most commonly used in commercial products were 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 Asbestosis, a fibrotic lung disease. Epidemiologic studies have found that asbestos exposure can cause more serious health effects, these include: lung cancer, mesothelioma (a cancer of the lining of the chest and abdominal cavity) and asbestos exposure is implicated in some cancers of the digestive tract.

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

The current PEL for asbestos fibers is 0.1 f/cc for employees working around or with asbestos containing building materials (ACBM).

On the University campus all work involving removal, repair, maintenance or cleanup of ACBM is to be done by workers with Asbestos Worker Training and Licensing, supervised by a Licensed Asbestos Supervisor. Whenever University employees become aware of a situation in their workplace where ACBM will be disturbed by their routine work or there is a repair situation involving or impacting ACBM their immediate supervisor must be informed. ACBM will be abated where normal employee activities will cause a situation where fibers of asbestos will become airborne.

It is the goal of the University to not only meet the mandated 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 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 airborne. Employees should take care not to disturb ACBM during their normal activities.

Information about employee asbestos awareness training, the location of ACBM on the University campus or other information about asbestos can be obtained from Pat Kerst (217) 333-1106 or e-mail to [p-kerst@uiuc.edu](mailto:p-kerst@uiuc.edu)

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