

ASBESTOS



What is asbestos and how is it harmful?

Asbestos is a fibrous mineral found in rock and soil. Due to its long and fine structure, asbestos fibers are strong and heat resistant, making it a valuable element in building materials. Asbestos is 1,200 times thinner than human hair, can suspend in the air for a long period of time, and can be easily inhaled if the contaminated material is disturbed. Long-term effects of asbestos inhalation can cause damage to the lungs, leading to diseases such as lung cancer, mesothelioma, and asbestosis. It can take 10-30 years after exposure for symptoms to be perceptible, so it is important to test suspected materials as soon as possible.



Finding and Identifying Asbestos:

Asbestos fibers may be found in:

- Attic and wall insulation
- Vinyl floor tiles and vinyl sheet flooring
- Roofing and siding shingles
- Textured paint
- Walls and floors around wood-burning stoves
- Hot water and steam pipes
- Heat-resistant fabrics
- Oil and coal furnaces and door gaskets
- Automobile clutches and brakes

The only way to accurately identify asbestos is to conduct a laboratory analysis of the suspected material. *Always err on the side of caution.* If you suspect there could be asbestos in your home or workplace, have the material analyzed immediately.



Take Action:

- If you suspect asbestos has gotten into the air, close off the contaminated room(s) and any windows, air ducts, or door drafts.
- The safest way to procure a sample of the suspected material is with the help of asbestos professionals who are trained in retrieving a sample without dispersing any fibers into the air.
- Most asbestos-containing material can be taken care of with repairs, as removal would require disturbing the material and releasing fibers into the air.
- Contact the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency at (651) 296-6300 or (800) 657-3864 for a list of contractors licensed in asbestos repair and/or removal.

More information can be found at:

www.epa.gov/asbestos

www.pca.state.mn.us/waste/asbestos-home-faqs

www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/asbestos/homeowner/index.html