

ASBESTOS Q & A



What is asbestos?

Asbestos is a naturally occurring mineral that separates into strong, very fine fibers. Asbestos may be present in many materials in your home and workplace. Asbestos is found widely in buildings built before 1980, and was often used as a very versatile insulator and fireproofing agent. In sprayable form, it coated ceilings and walls as a cheap fire retardant. In a less processed form, it was a critical component of insulating floss commonly found in attics and the walls of homes. Asbestos may be found in older home insulations, floor coverings, pipe insulation and older electrical equipment such as fuse boxes, lamp socket collars and receptacle boxes. It is hazardous if it can be crushed by hand pressure and its surface is not sealed, as small fibers may escape and enter the lungs.

How do I know if asbestos is present?

The only way to identify asbestos is to have a sample of the suspect material analyzed by a laboratory. Laboratories that do this work usually can be found by searching "Asbestos Consulting and Testing." Treat any material as possibly containing asbestos until it has been sampled and analyzed.

The general industry and construction asbestos standards (29 CFR 1910.1001 and 1926.1101) establish specific requirements for building owners because most asbestos-related construction activities involve previously installed building material. Building owners are often the best or only sources of information concerning asbestos.

What do I do if my project will disturb asbestos?

Residential projects: If your project is in a single family or a multi-family residence and meets the following three requirements, the MN Dept. of Health (MDH) must be notified of an asbestos project: 1.) The material being removed, enclosed or encapsulated is greater than 1% asbestos. 2.) The material is friable (it can be crumbled, pulverized, or reduced to powder by the pressure of an ordinary human hand). 3.) The material exceeds 10 linear feet on pipes, 6 square feet on other components, or 1 cubic foot if linear or square feet can't be determined. Flooring, roofing, siding and ceiling materials are excluded from notification in single family residences and buildings with 4 dwelling units or less.

Commercial projects: There are three situations where MDH **must** be notified for asbestos projects in a facility:

- **Single project:** If your project at a facility meets the following three requirements, then your project is notifiable:
 1. The material being removed, enclosed or encapsulated is greater than 1% asbestos; and
 2. The material is friable (that is, it can be crumbled, pulverized, or reduced to powder by the pressure of an ordinary human hand); and
 3. The quantity of material exceeds 260 linear feet on pipes; or 160 square feet on other components; or 35 cubic feet if linear or square feet can't be determined
- **Series of small projects:** A series of small related or unrelated projects at a facility conducted in a calendar year are regulated by MDH if the total quantity of material being worked on exceeds 260 linear feet, 160 square feet or 35 cubic feet. These projects are regulated from the start of the projects, not once the quantities have been surpassed.
- **Maintenance projects:** Scheduled maintenance projects at a facility conducted in a calendar year are regulated by MDH if the total amount of material being worked on exceeds 260 linear feet, 160 square feet or 35 cubic feet. That maintenance activity is regulated from the start of the projects.

Residential AND Commercial projects: Notify MDH of an asbestos-related work project by using MDH's Online Asbestos-Related Work Notification web page, or by submitting a completed Notification of Asbestos-Related Work form along with the 1% permit fee (or \$35 permit fee for a small residential project). This form can be used to notify both the MDH and Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA).

The completed notification form and permit fee must be received by MDH at least five (5) calendar days before beginning asbestos-related work.

Only Minnesota-licensed asbestos contractors may submit a notification to MDH. The notification must be by the contractor performing the work, and the permit fee must accompany the notification. If more than one contractor is performing work at a site, each must submit a separate notification to the MDH.

(Source: MN Department of Health website:

<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/asbestos/index.html>)