



What to Do When You Encounter Asbestos

Many people panic have when they first encounter asbestos materials. There *is* reason for concern, but you should know that asbestos issues can be addressed safely and cost-effectively. We've created this document to help you understand some of the basic steps involved in dealing with asbestos materials in your building.

Mark Schleyer
Sr. Asbestos Project Manager
Environmental Consulting Group

Know What You're Dealing With

The first step in addressing a potential asbestos problem is to determine exactly what you're dealing with. The unaided human eye cannot determine whether or not a material contains asbestos. Samples must be collected and then analyzed by a laboratory for that determination.

To determine the best way to handle the materials in question, the next step is often an asbestos inspection. An asbestos inspection often involves 1) a review of any previous reports and building plans, 2) a site visit and assessment by a state-licensed inspector, and 3) laboratory analysis of sampled materials and a written report.

During the testing process, building materials are typically analyzed by polarized light microscopy (PLM). In general, three samples of each similar material are collected. The cost for sample analysis is around \$15 per sample.



What does all this mean for you?

The past, widespread use of asbestos materials in construction means that it is not uncommon for businesses and homeowners to come across suspect asbestos-containing materials during renovation and maintenance projects. If you find yourself in this situation, remember that dealing with the issue does not have to be expensive or time-consuming. But choosing an experienced, knowledgeable, environmental consultant can make all the difference. Listed below are several things to keep in mind when choosing an environmental consultant.

When selecting a consultant to conduct an inspection of your facility, we recommend you choose a consultant that will:

- Keep you informed during each stage of the project.
- Submit their certificate of professional liability insurance.
- Use all the necessary safety precautions.
- Repair each sample location immediately after sample collection.
- Notify you (or the site manager) that they have completed their fieldwork and are leaving the site.
- Create figures in a program such as AutoCAD to clearly identify and document sample locations on figures you provide.
- Deliver a written report to you within two weeks of the site visit.

You Have Identified Asbestos Materials in Your Building – Why Hire a Consultant?

When dealing with an asbestos hazard, you should use a trained, licensed, professional who can provide an objective opinion on how to handle the material. When you go directly to the contractor to test for asbestos and provide removal estimates, there are obvious conflict-of-interest issues that often arise.

The correct approach in dealing with asbestos at a facility depends on your objectives. A consultant can help you identify those objectives in an impartial way. If the objective is to remove the asbestos materials,



then the consultant can help you obtain several competitive bids for a well-defined scope of work.

Since the asbestos removal work is almost always conducted in the vicinity of other building occupants, consultants should work with you to ensure that these occupied areas are isolated from the removal work. Consultants provide project monitoring and air testing during the removal project. This monitoring work is conducted to document that the work inside the asbestos containment was conducted safely. The air testing in occupied areas is used to document normal indoor air quality conditions during the project.

After the removal project, the consultant summarizes the work in a written report. The report contains air testing results, disposal records, and information regarding the final visual inspection and clearance testing.

Typical Process for Asbestos Removal Projects at a Commercial Facility

The section above described how choosing a knowledgeable, experienced consultant can help ensure a safe and competitively priced asbestos removal project. This section explains the abatement process for both a small and a large project. We will begin by describing a large project.

For large projects, it is important to create a project manual that protects the owner in the case of a dispute. The manual provides step-by-step procedures for removal of the various asbestos materials in each type of work area (e.g. occupied lobbies, bathrooms, mechanical rooms, etc.). A large asbestos removal project might include following activities:

1. Production of a project design and project manual.
2. A site walk-through with approved asbestos removal contractors.
3. Bid evaluation and contractor selection.
4. Asbestos removal activities



5. Final clearance inspection and air testing, to ensure that the work areas are safe for normal re-occupancy.
6. Production of a project report

For a smaller project (e.g. removal of 30 ft. of asbestos pipe insulation), a full project design and project manual can be completed, but they are often unnecessary. A consultant focused on your best interests will employ common sense in this situation. Watch out for companies who look to unnecessarily expand the scope of work to pad their bottom line at your expense.

A small asbestos removal project should include the following:

1. A site walk-through with approved asbestos removal contractors.
2. Bid evaluation and contractor selection.
3. Asbestos removal activities.
4. Final clearance inspection and air testing.
5. Issuance of a project report

Are There Other Options besides Removing the Asbestos Material? Can I Leave it in Place?

Yes, a building owner can choose to leave the materials in place. However, if you elect not to remove all the asbestos from a building, you will need a plan to manage the remaining asbestos materials.

When asbestos is known to be present in a building, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recommends that a pro-active asbestos operations and maintenance (O&M) program be implemented. The objective of an O&M program is to develop a set of guidelines and proper procedures to minimize the potential exposure of individuals to asbestos-containing materials.

To accomplish this objective, several work practices must be adhered to.

You must:



1. Maintain asbestos containing materials in good condition;
2. Ensure proper cleanup of disturbed asbestos materials;
3. Prevent further disturbances of asbestos materials; and,
4. Monitor the condition of the asbestos materials.

Elements of an Asbestos Operations and Maintenance Program

An Asbestos Operations and Maintenance Program typically includes the following elements:

Training

2-Hour Awareness Training

The 2-hour awareness training is intended and required for contractors and building maintenance workers who work in the vicinity of asbestos materials.

16-Hour O&M Training

This two-day training course is intended and required for maintenance staff, tradesmen, and construction workers who conduct activities that will involve asbestos disturbance.

Asbestos Project Manager

The asbestos project manager (APM) has overall responsibility for administration of the O&M Program. The APM ensures that safety precautions are followed in any construction, service, and maintenance work involving asbestos materials.

Notification

According to OSHA regulations, building owners "shall notify the following persons of the presence, location and quantity of ACM or PACM [presumed ACM], at the work sites in their buildings and facilities. Notification either shall be in writing, or shall consist of a personal communication between the owner and the person to whom notification must be given or their authorized representatives:

- Prospective employers applying or bidding for work whose employees reasonably can be expected to work in or adjacent to areas containing such material;



Environmental
Consulting
Group

- Employees of the owner who will work in, or adjacent to, areas containing such material;
- On multi-employer worksites, all employers of employees who will be performing work within, or adjacent to, areas containing such materials;
- Tenants who will occupy areas containing such material.

Signs and Labels

At the entrance to areas containing asbestos-containing materials (e.g. mechanical floors), warning signs must be posted. Where feasible, warning labels should be affixed to products containing asbestos, such as pipe insulation.

Next Step: Call In the Experts

We hope you feel more informed after reading this document. Now, let the experts at ECG take care of your asbestos issues.

Call us at (866) 726-9485 or contact us through our website at www.ecgmidwest.com for a FREE estimate and proposal.