

## OSHA Training Toolbox Talk: Hazardous Substance Awareness - Asbestos

*[Reference: Parts 1910, 1915, and 1926, subpart Z; 1926 subpart Z]*

Asbestos is a once-popular building material that may still be found in older buildings, vessels, and equipment, including insulation, floor tiles, roofing materials, pipe wrap, gaskets, brake components, and fireproofing materials. Although many asbestos-containing materials are no longer manufactured or installed, disturbances of existing asbestos-containing materials during renovation, maintenance, or demolition can release harmful fibers into the air.

The primary health concern with asbestos comes from breathing those airborne fibers. When the microscopic fibers are inhaled, they can become lodged deep in the lungs, where the body cannot easily remove them. Over time, this can lead to inflammation and scarring of lung tissue, reducing lung function, and increasing the risk of serious diseases. Health effects are typically associated with repeated or prolonged exposure over time, rather than brief, incidental contact.

Asbestos-containing materials often appear solid and harmless until they are cut, drilled, sanded, broken, or otherwise disturbed. Because asbestos fibers are extremely small and lightweight, they can remain airborne for long periods and may not be visible to the naked eye. This makes proper identification, labeling, and control of asbestos-containing materials especially important before work begins. Employees should never cut, drill, remove, or otherwise disturb any material that is marked with a warning sign or label indicating the presence of asbestos-containing materials.

Precautions to reduce exposure include identifying asbestos-containing materials through surveys or records before starting work, avoiding unnecessary disturbance, and using wet methods or local exhaust ventilation when required to limit fiber release. Only properly trained and authorized personnel should perform asbestos-related work. When applicable, required respiratory protection and protective clothing must be worn, and decontamination procedures must be followed. Contaminated clothing and equipment should be managed properly to prevent bringing asbestos fibers home, where family members could be unintentionally exposed.

If you are working with or around asbestos, or if you see a label or warning sign indicating its presence, remember that merely being near asbestos does not necessarily mean you are overexposed or at imminent risk. Following proper controls, procedures, and safety measures helps ensure exposure remains below OSHA's permissible limits.

If you have any questions or concerns about asbestos hazards or exposure, please direct them to your safety manager, supervisor, or other workplace representative. And please be sure to sign the training certification form to ensure you get credit for attending today's OSHA toolbox talk.

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Company Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Training led by: \_\_\_\_\_

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