

# Asbestos

Asbestos is a naturally occurring mineral fiber. It was used in numerous building materials and vehicle products for its strength and ability to resist heat and corrosion before its dangerous health effects were discovered. Individual asbestos fibers cannot be seen by the naked eye, which puts workers at an increased risk. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has regulations to protect workers from the hazards of asbestos.

## What Materials Contain Asbestos?

Some materials are presumed to contain asbestos if installed before 1981. Examples of these materials, as well as other presumed asbestos-containing materials are:

- Thermal system insulation
- Roofing and siding shingles
- Vinyl floor tiles
- Plaster, cement, putties and caulk
- Ceiling tiles and spray-on coatings
- Industrial pipe wrapping
- Heat-resistant textiles
- Automobile brake linings and clutch pads



The potential for a material containing asbestos to release fibers depends on whether the material is friable or not. Friable means that the material can be crumbled with hand pressure. Friable materials release fibers into the air more easily than non-friable materials.

## How Do I Recognize Damaged or Exposed Material?

Damaged or exposed friable material must be encapsulated or abated by FD&O or an approved and licensed contractor. Damage or deterioration can take several forms, including:

- Compromised outer layer
- Water damage
- Exposed material by hitting, rubbing or handling
- Exposed to extreme vibration or air flow

**ONLY** intact undisturbed asbestos-containing materials (ACMs) can be safely left in place when in good condition.

## What are the Health Effects Associated with Asbestos Exposure?

- If asbestos fibers are released into the air during activities that disturb asbestos-containing materials, they can then be inhaled without knowing and trapped in the lungs. If swallowed, they can become embedded into the digestive tract as well.
- Asbestos is a known human carcinogen and can cause chronic lung disease as well as lung and other cancers. Symptoms and/or cancer may take many years to develop following exposure.

## Important to Remember

- Only EH&S and approved contractors are authorized to handle asbestos at SJSU.
- Contact EH&S before starting any work involving or near known or potential asbestos.
- Never disturb or attempt to clean up any suspicious material.
- Report any concerns to FD&O at **(408) 924-1990** or [workcontrol@sjsu.edu](mailto:workcontrol@sjsu.edu) or to EH&S at **(408) 924-1969** or [ehs@sjsu.edu](mailto:ehs@sjsu.edu).
- Refer to the [asbestos](#) page for more information.



## References

- Regulation: OSHA standards 1910.1001
- OSHA: [Asbestos Fact Sheet](#)