

Asbestos Awareness Training

Asbestos is a mineral that comes apart into fibers. Asbestos is dangerous when it is in the air and you inhale it. It is very easy to get asbestos in the air. Asbestos can kill you, but you can protect yourself. To work safely with asbestos, you have to keep it out of the air. When asbestos gets into the air, you have to filter the air with special filters called HEPA filters. Asbestos is in more than 3,000 different products.

In buildings, you may find asbestos in:

- Sprayed-on ceiling insulation
- Pipe and boiler insulation
- Duct insulation
- Floor and ceiling tiles

Friable (crumbly) asbestos is more dangerous than non-friable (hard) asbestos. The only way to tell if something contains asbestos is to send it to a lab. A lab can test a piece of material, called a bulk sample. If you do not know if something is asbestos, call your supervisor and/or ES&H.

There are three common kinds of asbestos fibers:

- Chrysotile (95% of asbestos in buildings)
- Amosite (hard to wet)
- Crocidolite

Asbestos is something that deserves respect and needs to be worked with/around safely. If you ever suspect something of containing asbestos, leave the area and call ES&H for assistance.

The air in buildings that contain asbestos on the campus of Murray State is relatively the same as ordinary outside air.

Key Facts

Asbestos can kill you unless you protect yourself.

Asbestos is silent and deadly. You do not know it is there. You cannot see, hear, feel, taste, smell, or touch the small asbestos fibers that enter your body. When asbestos is in the air, it gets into your body when you breathe and when you swallow.

Diseases

Asbestos causes four types of disease:

1. Asbestosis, “white lung”- a scarring of the lungs which makes it hard to breathe.
2. Mesothelioma, the “marker disease” – a cancer of the lining of the lungs or the lining of the abdomen. It is very rare, but is typically fatal. It is not dose-related.
3. Lung Cancer (also caused by smoking) is the biggest killer of all the asbestos diseases. Asbestos workers who smoke are 80 times more likely to get lung cancer than the general public.
4. Other Cancers- cancers of the stomach, etc.

Dose-Related

The more asbestos fibers you breathe or swallow, the more likely you are to get sick. This is called a dose relationship. The higher the amount of asbestos, the greater your chances of getting an asbestos disease. Mesothelioma is the exception.

Latency Period

All of the asbestos diseases have a latency period. The latency period is the time gap between when you take the asbestos into your body and when you become sick. For asbestos diseases the latency period is between 10 to 40 years long.