

Asbestos Information Sheet

Guideline

Office of Risk Management

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Contents

DEFINITIONS.....	1
WHAT IS ASBESTOS?	1
WHAT IS ASBESTOS USED FOR?	1
ACM - COMMONLY FOUND LOCATIONS.....	1
HEALTH RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH ASBESTOS.....	1
REPORTING PROCEDURE	2
ASBESTOS ABATEMENT	2
WHERE HAS ACM BEEN IDENTIFIED AT THE UNIVERSITY?	3
WHAT IS THE UNIVERSITY’S POLICY ON PROTECTING WORKERS AND STUDENTS?	3
HOW DO I FIND OUT ABOUT ONGOING ASBESTOS-RELATED OPERATIONS?.....	3
WHO HAS THE INFORMATION CONCERNING ACM INSPECTIONS?.....	3
WHAT KIND OF PROTECTION SHOULD I USE IF THERE ARE RENOVATIONS OR OPERATIONS BEING CARRIED OUT IN MY BUILDING?.....	3
IS THERE A TRAINING COURSE RELATED TO ASBESTOS?	3
WHO SHOULD YOU CONTACT IF YOU HAVE ANY HEALTH CONCERNS?.....	4
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION	4

DEFINITIONS

ACM – Asbestos-Containing Material; material that contains 0.5% or more asbestos by dry weight

ORM – Office of Risk Management

PPE – Personal Protective Equipment used at work (e.g. hard hat, safety boots, respirator, gloves, etc.) including any specialized clothing or equipment worn by an employee to protect against a potential hazard

WHAT IS ASBESTOS?

Asbestos is a natural odourless mineral with unusual qualities - it is strong enough to resist high temperatures, chemical attack and wear, and it is also a poor conductor, and thus insulates well against heat and electricity. Because of its properties, asbestos was widely used for construction purposes before its harmful health effects became known.

Asbestos exists in various shapes and colours. The most common types of asbestos are the following:

- **Chrysotile** - this is the most common type of asbestos found in buildings; it is also known as “white asbestos.”
- **Amosite** - also known as “brown asbestos”, it has been used in thermal insulation and asbestos cement products where greater structural strength is required.
- **Crocidolite** - “blue asbestos”, not as commonly used as the previous two types and has rarely been encountered in University buildings.
- **Other forms of asbestos** - include anthophyllite, tremolite, and actinolite; these are rarely encountered and are found mainly as contaminants in other minerals.

WHAT IS ASBESTOS USED FOR?

You should not be alarmed or surprised to find out that some materials in your building may contain asbestos, if it was constructed pre 1985. Prior to the 1980’s, asbestos was widely used in private or public buildings (hospitals, schools, offices, etc.).

ACM - COMMONLY FOUND LOCATIONS

Common uses of asbestos-containing materials include hot water heating systems insulation, wall and ceiling tiles, roofing and flooring products, insulation against fire and sound, laboratory hood liners, drywall joint compound in drywall walls, stucco wall plaster, etc.

HEALTH RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH ASBESTOS

Risks are greatest for workers in industries which produce and use asbestos, such as mining and milling. These workers can be exposed to asbestos fibres on a regular basis, which results in an impact on their health depending on the specific circumstances.

Asbestos poses health risks only when asbestos-containing materials are disturbed or damaged and fibres become airborne and are inhaled by a person. If the asbestos fibres are bound tightly together, such as in commercial materials like floor or ceiling tiles and siding, Health Canada considers that there are no significant health risks. Asbestos only poses a health risk when fibres become airborne and people breathe them in.

Exposure health risks depend on factors such as:

- Concentration of asbestos fibres in the air
- Duration of exposure
- Frequency of exposure
- Size of the asbestos particles inhaled
- Amount of time since the initial exposure

The inhalation of asbestos fibres can cause serious diseases of the lungs and other organs. These effects may not appear until years after the exposure has occurred. Asbestos fibres associated with these health risks are too small to be seen with the naked eye, which can make identification difficult. Asbestos fibre exposure can lead to scarring of the lungs that may potentially develop into an increased risk of developing lung cancer, asbestosis (fibrous scarring of the lung tissue), mesothelioma (cancer of the chest cavity lining), and other diseases (cancer of the lung and lung cavity, esophagus, stomach, colon and pancreas, pleural plaques, pleural thickening and pleural effusion).

Medical experts agree that non-friable asbestos-containing materials pose **no significant health risk** unless they are being drilled, ground, broken, sanded or otherwise worked on.

REPORTING PROCEDURE

If you have observed an asbestos-containing material that has deteriorated, or has been disturbed, it must be reported to your supervisor. Your supervisor will contact the Building Management Agent and / or Facilities Service directly at 2222.

Any hazards, whether asbestos-related or not, must be reported to your supervisor, unless there is an immediate threat to life, safety, property or the environment, in which case you must call Protection Services at 5411.

ASBESTOS ABATEMENT

The abatement (or removal) of asbestos-containing materials is strictly regulated and controlled under the Ontario Occupational Health & Safety Act, Regulation 278/05. Handling and removal of asbestos-containing materials should only be carried out by licensed professionals in accordance with Ontario established standards. In general, when asbestos-containing materials are removed or disturbed, the area must be hermetically separated. The work procedures employed are designed to minimize fibrous release, and sampling of air quality is performed inside and outside the work area to ensure fibrous release is kept as low as possible.

WHERE HAS ACM BEEN IDENTIFIED AT THE UNIVERSITY?

In 1992, an Asbestos Site Assessment was performed and the Dames and Moore Report was prepared that identified a list of locations around the campus that contained asbestos. In accordance with the amended legislation, a complete inventory of asbestos-containing material locations at the University of Ottawa has been completed (October 2007). Reports are available at Facilities Service.

Today, prior to any construction, renovation or maintenance operations, sampling and inspections are performed to anticipate possible asbestos-containing materials.

WHAT IS THE UNIVERSITY'S POLICY ON PROTECTING WORKERS AND STUDENTS?

It is the responsibility of the University of Ottawa to provide a safe and healthy environment free from avoidable or significant risks of serious injuries or illnesses associated with exposure to asbestos fibres. This responsibility is implemented through the "Asbestos Management and Control Program" as well as the "Building-Related Work Restriction Directive for Buildings Constructed pre 1983" developed by the University and administered by the Office of Risk Management.

The Regulation on Asbestos was amended in 2005. In light of the revised Regulation, the University updated its existing program to incorporate the changes.

HOW DO I FIND OUT ABOUT ONGOING ASBESTOS-RELATED OPERATIONS?

Before any construction, renovation or maintenance operations that may disturb ACM can commence, work must be approved by Facilities Service and Office of Risk Management.

WHO HAS THE INFORMATION CONCERNING ACM INSPECTIONS?

Facilities, Office of Risk Management, and the Building Management Agent have the information or have access to the ACM inspections that have been carried out on campus.

WHAT KIND OF PROTECTION SHOULD I USE IF THERE ARE RENOVATIONS OR OPERATIONS BEING CARRIED OUT IN MY BUILDING?

If the ACM has been identified and there is a chance that the construction, renovation or maintenance procedures might disturb the material, the work area will be hermetically separated from the rest of the workplace by walls or other suitable means. Construction workers who do (or may) come into direct contact with the ACM are trained for this scenario and wear the required personal protective equipment. Other workers and students working on or visiting the building do not need to wear any PPE as the work area will be hermetically separated from the building (including ventilation).

IS THERE A TRAINING COURSE RELATED TO ASBESTOS?

Asbestos operations training courses are organized on demand. These courses are open to Facilities personnel and other workers who may come in contact with ACM. For more information concerning

worker training, please consult the [course registration website](#) or contact the Office of Risk Management.

WHO SHOULD YOU CONTACT IF YOU HAVE ANY HEALTH CONCERNS?

If you have any health related concerns, please contact the Health and Wellness Office at ext. 1473 or by email at santerh@uOttawa.ca.

You may also contact the Office of Risk Management at ext. 5892 or at safety@uottawa.ca. You can also consult your [Functional Occupational Health and Safety Committee](#).

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- [Health Canada](#)
- [Ontario Regulation 278/05 – Asbestos on Construction Projects and in Buildings and Repair Operation](#)