

NOTICE TO BUILDING OCCUPANTS

ASBESTOS-CONTAINING MATERIALS

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has released new regulations concerning occupational exposure to asbestos. The regulations require the employer to either presume certain building materials contain asbestos or conduct appropriate tests on the building materials. The building owner must also inform employees and contractors of the location of Asbestos-Containing Materials (ACM), Presumed Asbestos-Containing Materials (PACM), and, where appropriate, post warning signs and label ACM and PACM.

Asbestos is the term for a group of naturally occurring mineral fibers. Asbestos was used in a wide variety of industrial products including thermal system insulation, cement board, floor tile, ceiling tile, and acoustic plaster. Asbestos can be a health hazard if the fibers become airborne. Long-term (years of) exposure to airborne asbestos fibers has been associated with an increased risk of lung cancer and other respiratory diseases.

Over the years, Radiological and Environmental Management (REM) has analyzed hundreds of air samples for asbestos. The results demonstrate that unless ACM is intentionally disturbed (e.g. sanding, grinding, cutting, abrading, pulverizing), staff is not at increased risk of asbestos exposure. These findings are consistent with studies conducted by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

Only specially trained and accredited personnel can perform asbestos work. Whenever ACM must be disturbed, special procedures are used to ensure occupant safety. Work practices that can release asbestos fibers and that must be avoided are listed below.

- Do not gouge, cut, strip, or otherwise disturb thermal insulation on pipes, tanks, heaters or boilers.
- Do not sand, grind, cut, abrade, drill, or pulverize asbestos-containing floor tile, linoleum, acoustic plaster, spray-applied fireproofing, duct insulation, and laboratory bench tops; asbestos cement sheet (transite); asbestos cement piping; asbestos packings and gaskets; roofing felts; and fire door interiors.
- Do not lift or otherwise disturb asbestos-containing ceiling tiles.
- Do not dry sweep asbestos-containing debris (e.g. damaged thermal insulation).
- Avoid creating dust when handling asbestos-containing laboratory and electrical equipment.
- Report damaged ACM and PACM to your building deputy.

If you have any questions about the location of ACM or PACM in your work area or any other questions about asbestos in your building, please contact REM at 496-1937.

Radiological and Environmental Management
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