

# Asbestos Awareness

## When is Asbestos Dangerous

The most common way for asbestos fibers to enter the body is through breathing. In fact, asbestos containing material is not generally considered to be harmful unless it is releasing dust or fibers into the air where they can be inhaled or ingested. Many of the fibers will become trapped in the mucous membranes of the nose and throat where they can then be removed, but some may pass deep into the lungs, or, if swallowed, into the digestive tract. Once they are trapped in the body, the fibers can cause health problems.

Asbestos that is "friable" may be crumbled, pulverized or reduced to powder in your hand when dry. Friable asbestos has the potential to release asbestos fibers that can become airborne, and potentially create a health hazard. Sprayed on asbestos insulation is highly friable. Asbestos floor tile is not.

Asbestos that is bonded, coated, painted, covered, or otherwise protected so that it doesn't release airborne fibers *does not* present a health hazard.

## Where is Asbestos Found

Asbestos may be found in many different products and many different places. Examples of products that might contain asbestos are:

- Sprayed-on fire proofing and insulation in buildings
- Insulation for pipes and boilers
- Wall and ceiling insulation
- Ceiling tiles
- Floor tiles (particularly 9")
- Interiors of fire doors
- Putties, caulks, and cements (such as in chemical carrying cement pipes)
- Roofing shingles
- Siding shingles on old residential buildings
- Wall and ceiling texture in older buildings and homes
- Joint compound in older buildings and homes
- Brake linings and clutch pads

## How to Avoid Asbestos Exposure

In order to avoid being exposed to asbestos, you must be aware of the locations it is likely to be found. **If you do not know whether something is asbestos or not, assume that it is** until it is verified otherwise. Remember that you cannot tell if floor or ceiling tiles contain asbestos just by looking at them.

If you have reason to suspect that something is asbestos, either because it is labeled as such, or because it something that is likely to contain asbestos (9" floor tile, for example), **DO NOT DISTURB IT.**

### Never...

- |         |         |        |
|---------|---------|--------|
| ▪ Drill | Hammer  | Cut    |
| ▪ Saw   | Break   | Damage |
| ▪ Move  | Disturb |        |

Housekeepers and custodians should never sand or dry-buff flooring unless it has sufficient finish so that the pad can't contact the bare floor, and only wet stripping methods may be used during stripping operations. Low abrasion pads should be used at speeds below 300 rpm.

Report any damaged pipe insulation, ceiling tile, 9" floor tile, fallen clumps of sprayed-on insulation, etc. to your supervisor. Take measures to prevent others from disturbing the spill until an Asbestos Abatement crew arrives.

For questions or concerns about asbestos you may contact one of FM's Certified Asbestos Inspectors:  
David R. Canterbury, Johnny G. Coleman, George I. Davis, Marvell Howard, Roger C. Johnston