

Asbestos Fact Sheet

Asbestos is the common name for a group of naturally-occurring silicate minerals that separate into thin but strong fibers. There are six asbestos minerals which have been used commercially: chrysotile, amosite, crocidolite, anthophyllite, tremolite and actinolite. Asbestos is not combustible, has high tensile strength, has good thermal and electrical insulating properties, is moderately resistant to chemicals, and has good frictional properties. It is durable, flexible, strong, and resistant to wear.

Use

Asbestos has been used for many commercial and public applications including:

- Roofing and Flooring Products
- Textiles
- Fireproofing
- Friction Products (e.g., Brake Linings)
- Reinforcing Cement, Pipes, and Other Materials
- Thermal Insulation
- Acoustical Insulation

Health Effects & Concerns

While asbestos has proven useful, it has been found to cause environmental and health hazards. Asbestos cannot be easily destroyed or degraded. It is not known what amount of asbestos are hazardous over time. Asbestos fibers may enter the body through inhalation or ingestion. Diseases which have been attributed to asbestos exposure include such diseases as asbestosis, mesothelioma, and gastrointestinal cancers. Asbestos also may have a co-cancer-causing effect with tobacco smoking.

Asbestos workers (i.e., working 40 hours/week - 48 weeks/year) who are smokers, and who are not properly protected, have increased risk of developing lung cancers compared to non-exposed nonsmokers. Asbestosis has been associated with exposure to high levels of asbestos. The relationship between exposure to low levels of asbestos development of a cancer is uncertain. Therefore, it is important that exposures to asbestos be kept as low as possible.

Removal & Management

TU has an [Asbestos Management Plan](#), which provides for restricted access to potentially hazardous locations and the systematic inspection/repair of damaged asbestos-containing materials (ACM). Only trained and protected personnel are allowed to work with asbestos materials. All other personnel should report any suspected asbestos problems to EHS and should not disturb it. This plan is periodically improved to meet changing regulations and recommended safe practices.

Not all types of building materials have been assessed at this time for the presence of asbestos. Floor tiles, floor tile mastics, plasters, roofing asphalts, drywall, and other miscellaneous materials must be presumed as asbestos-containing unless proven otherwise. TU is resurveying, as needed, to identify these materials and their locations. Available asbestos inventory is listed [online](#).

Resources

To request documents, reviews for procedures, processes, or equipment, or general inquiries, contact EHS by emailing safety@towson.edu or by calling the Environmental Health & Safety (EHS) office at 410-704-2949.