



ASBESTOS and



FIRE DAMAGE CLEANUPS

What You Need To Know

WHAT IS ASBESTOS?

Asbestos is a mineral fiber. There are several types of asbestos fibers. Asbestos was added to a variety of products to strengthen them and to provide heat insulation and fire resistance.

HOW CAN ASBESTOS AFFECT THE HEALTH?

Breathing asbestos fibers can lead to an increased risk of serious diseases such as:

- Asbestosis – a fibrotic scarring of the lungs.
- Lung Cancer
- Mesothelioma - a cancer of the lining of the chest and the abdominal cavity.

Most people exposed to small amounts of asbestos, as we all are in our daily lives, do not develop these health problems. However, if disturbed, asbestos material may release asbestos fibers, which can be inhaled into the lungs. The fibers can remain there for a long time, increasing the risk of disease. Asbestos material that would crumble easily if handled, or that has been subjected to dust-producing activities, is more likely to create a health hazard.

COULD ASBESTOS BE PRESENT IN THE REMNANTS OF A BUILDING AFTER A FIRE INCIDENT?

Asbestos was a very common ingredient in many different types of materials installed in residential, institutional, commercial, and industrial buildings of 1970's construction vintage and earlier. However, it is important to note that asbestos has not been fully banned in the United States and several modern building materials can still legally contain it. ***DO NOT ASSUME THAT A BUILDING IS ASBESTOS-FREE SOLELY BASED ON ITS AGE OF CONSTRUCTION.***

If asbestos-containing materials are present in a building before a fire, they will be present after the fire is over and when site cleanup activities begin. Asbestos fibers are very likely to become dislodged from fire-damaged materials, and if such materials are improperly disturbed, present a high exposure risk.



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IF ASBESTOS COULD BE PRESENT - HOW SHOULD BUILDING REMNANTS AND ASH / DEBRIS BE HANDLED AFTER A FIRE INCIDENT?

It is best to assume that structural remnants and associated ash and debris from a fire-damaged building contain asbestos and to handle/dispose of this material as asbestos-contaminated, in accordance with the Vermont Regulations for Asbestos Control.

If assessment of the ash/debris for the presence of asbestos is desired, then such an assessment must be undertaken by a Vermont-licensed Asbestos Inspector.

All handling and packaging of confirmed or assumed asbestos-containing materials and asbestos contaminated debris must be performed by a Vermont-licensed Asbestos Abatement Contractor in accordance with Vermont Regulations for Asbestos Control. Non-licensed personnel (such as an excavator operator) made need to be incorporated in the cleanup effort, as long as it is approved in advance by this Department.



ARE THERE ANY NOTIFICATION AND PERMITTING REQUIREMENTS FOR HANDLING ASBESTOS?

The Vermont Regulations for Asbestos Control have specific notification requirements where renovation or demolition activities (including fire damage cleanup) take place. Fire cleanup activities involving the handling of confirmed or assumed asbestos must be conducted under an asbestos abatement permit issued by this Department.

For private, single-family, non-rental dwellings damaged by a fire incident, a permit may not be required if the cleanup activity is undertaken by the owner of that property. However, all handling and disposal of asbestos-containing materials and associated debris must be done in accordance with the Vermont Regulations for Asbestos Control.

Depending on the type of building undergoing the cleanup effort, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency may also need to be notified in advance of the clean-up.

The Asbestos Program provides certification lists of Inspectors, Contractors, and Laboratories. We also have guidance on sampling and work standards. We can also provide you with technical assistance and additional information about State and Federal requirements.