



Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Asbestos Abatement

Q. Is asbestos abatement in an occupied building safe?

A. Asbestos abatement contractors must follow strict state and federal regulations when performing asbestos abatement to minimize the potential for asbestos to migrate outside the work area. In addition, all the personnel involved with asbestos abatement are trained and certified by the state annually.

The abatement work area is segregated from occupied/non-abatement areas by sealing all openings between the work area and non-work area (i.e. doors, windows, ventilation openings, drains, wall penetrations, etc.) with a single layer of 6-mil or greater polyethylene sheeting or an equivalent airtight barrier as to prevent air from escaping the work area. The work area is placed under “negative pressure” by utilizing "negative air machines (NAMs)" which draw air from inside the abatement work area and exhausts it outside of the building through a series of filters, including a High Efficiency Particulate Air (HEPA) filter, to remove any asbestos fibers and all dusts that may contain asbestos. This ensures that the abatement work area is "negative" with respect to the non-work areas so that air flows into the abatement work area and does not flow out of the abatement work area into occupied areas. The negative pressure is monitored and recorded during the entire removal process.

During removal, all the materials are wetted with amended water to minimize dust and removed materials are immediately placed into 6-mil or greater polyethylene bags or lined drums. During all friable asbestos removal, a third-party consultant conducts air monitoring outside of the abatement area by collecting samples at strategic locations to confirm that there are no elevated fiber levels outside the work area.

Given these precautions, people outside of the abatement area are at extremely low risk for exposure to asbestos from these abatement projects.

Q. It looks like there is an air tube coming out of the abatement area. Is there asbestos coming out of it?

A. In all asbestos abatement containment areas, a "NAM or NAMs" draw air from inside the abatement work area and exhausts it outside of the building through a series of filters, including a HEPA filter, to remove any asbestos fibers and all dusts that may contain asbestos. The exhaust from this machine is typically outside, if it cannot be outside then it is monitored by a third part consultant. The air coming from it has been filtered through filters that trap asbestos fibers, thus it poses extremely low asbestos exposure risk.

Q. During the abatement, can asbestos travel to other areas through the ventilation system?

A. During the preparation of the abatement area, any vents connected to the building's ventilation system are sealed and the ventilation system is turned off to the work area. Thus, protective measures are taken to prevent asbestos from traveling to areas outside of the containment area.

Q. How do we know that asbestos is not coming out of the abatement area?

A. During all friable asbestos removal, a third-party consultant is hired to conduct air monitoring outside of the abatement area by collecting samples at strategic locations to confirm that there are no elevated fiber levels outside the work area. These samples are analyzed daily.



Q. How do we know that the area is safe after an asbestos abatement?

A. Asbestos abatement regulations require a third-party consultant to perform a “Final Visual Clearance” and “Final Clearance Air Monitoring” after the area has been cleaned, before the containment has been removed, and before the area may be reoccupied. To pass the “Final Visual Clearance” the entire work area must be free of all visible dust and debris. Once the “Final Visual Clearance” is passed the “Final Clearance Air Monitoring” is conducted. The air is agitated utilizing a leaf blower and box fan(s) to provide a worst-case scenario. Samples are collected, analyzed, and results must be equal or less than the current clearance criteria.

Q. Are the people removing asbestos containing materials university employees?

A. The university has a few employees that are trained for very small removal projects for operations and maintenance purposes. All the other asbestos abatement projects are contracted to General Abatement Contractors that are licensed by the state who employ trained and certified supervisors and workers.

Q. How do we know that the asbestos abatement contractors are doing their job correctly?

A. A third party environmental consultant is retained by the university to ensure that the contractor is performing work per applicable regulations and specifications, they also provide air monitoring and clearance activities. Abatement projects involving more than 160 linear feet on pipes, 260 square feet on other surfaces, or the volume equivalent of a 55-gallon drum are permitted by the state. State regulatory inspectors can conduct unannounced inspections of abatement projects at any time.

Q. What happens to the asbestos that is removed?

A. While still in the abatement work area, the contractors place the wet asbestos debris in specially marked bags. Before bringing them out of the abatement work area containment, the sealed bags of debris are cleaned and then placed in second bag that is also marked. The sealed bags are placed in locked dumpsters before being transported to a secure landfill that accepts asbestos waste. Waste can also be placed into lined drums that are then sealed, cleaned, and transported to the landfill.

Q. How do the asbestos abatement contractors avoid bringing asbestos out of the abatement area on their clothing?

A. Anyone entering the regulated asbestos work area must wear disposable suits, hoods, gloves, shoe covers, and respirators. Attached to the abatement work area is a decontamination unit/area where the personnel remove their protective clothing before entering the clean room. In most cases the decontamination unit includes a shower that must be utilized for decontamination prior to exiting the work area. At no time does anyone exit the abatement area without properly decontaminating themselves. In addition, air monitoring is typically performed in the clean room outside the abatement work area to document there is no contamination outside the abatement work area.

For additional information or question please contact:

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