

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ON ASBESTOS HAZARD ABATEMENT PROJECTS

Buffalo State College

1. Does this project present a real-time hazard to me? No. Abatement activities are conducted only as allowed by Code Rule 56 which requires isolation of the abatement area from your work or travel area. You cannot inadvertently wander into a containment area. Signage is required to give you guidance; physical barriers will not permit your entry into the space without significant effort.

2. What are the two different types of asbestos? Non-friable asbestos is any material that contains more than 1% asbestos but **cannot** be pulverized under hand pressure. The asbestos is basically encapsulated in the product. Examples include vinyl asbestos floor tile, mastics, and caulking. Friable asbestos is any material that contains more than 1% asbestos by weight or area and **can** be crumbled, pulverized or reduced to powder by the pressure of a human hand. Examples include some types of fireproofing, pipe insulation.

3. Why is there asbestos on campus? Asbestos was used in building materials for many years for sound absorption and resistance to heat, electrical and chemical damage. In 1973, the Environmental Protection Agency began regulating the use of asbestos as a part of The Clean Air Act. SUNY has been systematically abating asbestos from the campus as it renovates areas. The amount is decreasing each year; and there is still some asbestos left on campus.

4. Are there health hazards associated with asbestos? Yes, there can be negative health impacts (primarily lung related diseases) associated with exposure to asbestos. These impacts generally occur 15-30 years after exposure.

5. What is the campus doing to protect me during an asbestos abatement project? The NYS Department of Labor and EPA tightly regulate asbestos abatement projects. Bulk material sampling and air sampling occur before a project begins and continue throughout the abatement project; samplings and testings are performed by a third party. Both the contractor and consultant are certified to perform their respective work. In addition, the campus has staff trained and certified in asbestos planning, abatement and monitoring who provide an additional level of review on the project. Enclosures are built to completely seal all air from escaping the abatement area and only allow air to enter. The air is also filtered through HEPA (highly efficiency particulate air) filters which capture 99.7% of all particles down to 0.3 microns in size. One micron is 1/25,000 of an inch.

6. Is the air in my building safe to breathe during an abatement project? Absolutely! The health and safety of students, faculty and staff is of the utmost importance to the campus. As mentioned above, the air is constantly monitored before, during and after a project. The campus would never allow individuals into a building if the air was not safe to breathe.

7. Why does the air sometimes smell different during a project? General construction dust and debris may have an odor; however this is not harmful. Some people may be more sensitive to environmental conditions than others.

8. Who do I contact if I have questions or concerns during a project? You should always feel free to contact Environmental Health & Safety with questions or concerns regarding asbestos or any related safety concerns. They can be reached at 878-4038. More information on asbestos can be found in the identification and field guide via the EH&S website.