

# Asbestos

This safety talk is designed for discussion leaders to use in preparing safety meetings. Set a specific time and date for your safety meeting. Publicize your meeting so everyone involved will be sure to attend.

Review this safety talk before the meeting and become familiar with its content. Make notes about the points made in this talk that pertain to your workplace. You should be able to present the material in your own words and lead the discussion without reading it. Collect whatever materials and props you will need ahead of time. Try to use equipment in your workplace to demonstrate your points.

## BEGINNING THE MEETING

Give the safety talk in your own words. Use the printed talk merely as a guide. The purpose of a safety meeting is to initiate discussion of safety problems and provide solutions to those problems. Encourage employees to discuss hazards or potential hazards they encounter on the job. Ask them to suggest ways to improve safety in their area.

Don't let the meeting turn into a gripe session about unrelated topics. As discussion leader, it's your job to make sure the topic is safety. Discussing other topics wastes time and can ruin the effectiveness of your safety meeting. At the end of the meeting, ask employees to sign a sheet on the back of this talk as a record that they attended the safety meeting. Keep this talk on file for your records.

## GENERAL DISCUSSION

Did you know that just 50 years ago, people called asbestos the 'magic mineral'? It's amazingly strong and fireproof, so it was used in thousands of different products. But now that we know how dangerous asbestos is, the law says you need special training to work with it. You need to learn about respirators, protective clothing, special work methods, and other safety precautions. We can't give you all this information in a few minutes. What we can do today is make sure everyone is aware of the dangers of asbestos. If an asbestos crew is doing a job near your work area, you need to know what's going on and how it affects you. It's also possible that you might run into asbestos on your own job unexpectedly. You or a crewmember may want to add a personal story about asbestos.

Next, discuss with the crew where there may be a danger of asbestos exposure at this particular job site. Explain what testing has been done, and what safety precautions apply.

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Ask the Crew these Questions:

After each question, give the crew time to suggest possible answers. Use the information following each question to add points that no one mentions.

1. Why are so many safety precautions required for asbestos? What's so dangerous about it?

- Asbestos fibers are very small. If you inhale them, they go deep into your lungs. They stay there and can cause disease from 10 to 40 years later.
- Asbestos can cause a lung disease called asbestosis, and a rare type of cancer called mesothelioma. Only people who are exposed to asbestos get these diseases.
- Asbestos also increases your risk of lung cancer and other types of cancer.
- The health risk is increased by smoking.

2. How can asbestos fibers get in the air?

1. Asbestos products can release fibers into the air when they are in poor condition, when they are cut, or when nearby work disturbs them.
2. Asbestos products are called friable when you can crush them with finger and hand pressure alone. Friable materials are more likely to release fibers into the air.

3. Sometimes we run into asbestos on a job unexpectedly. What are some materials on construction sites that might contain asbestos?

1. There may be asbestos in roofing felt, roof patch material, vinyl tile, linoleum backing, transite, asbestos cement (AC) pipe and sheet pipe insulation, fireproofing, and spray-on decorative acoustical ceiling material.
2. Most new products don't contain asbestos (although some still do). Asbestos exposure is most likely when renovating or demolishing older structures.

4. If you think there may be an asbestos hazard, how can you find out for sure?

1. To find out if a material contains asbestos, the company can send samples to a lab for testing. You can't identify asbestos just by looking at it.
2. If necessary, the company can also bring in a qualified professional to measure the asbestos dust level in the air with instruments. This is called air monitoring.
3. If you suspect that there's asbestos around, speak up! Ask if anyone has checked it out.

5. What happens if we do discover some asbestos on the job site?

We will stop work and clear the area.

A certified expert will decide how to handle the situation safely and make sure worker exposure is kept as low as possible.

Only a properly trained crew will work with the asbestos.

The crew will take all required safety precautions. For example, they may:

1. Restrict access to the asbestos area and post warning signs.
2. Use respirators (not just dust masks) and full body coverings.
3. Wet down the asbestos to reduce dust.
4. Use power tools that have special exhaust filters.
5. Get regular medical exams.

6. If you work around asbestos dust, why is it important to change your clothes and wash up before you go home?

1. You might bring asbestos fibers home on your clothes or in your car. Your family could breathe them. It's possible for them to get asbestos-related diseases this way.

Explain cleanup procedures on this site: how and where to clean up, what to do with contaminated clothing, etc.:

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7. What about disposal? Suppose you want to get rid of a few items that may contain asbestos, like some old roofing material or a pipe elbow. Can you just throw them in the dumpster?

1. No. All asbestos waste, scrap, and contaminated clothing that might get asbestos dust in the air should be disposed of just like any other

hazardous waste. Follow all rules for hazardous waste disposal. For example, put the material in closed containers that are properly labeled.

On this site, we have these procedures for hazardous waste disposal. Explain procedures:

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OSHA Regulations:

OSHA requires most of the asbestos safety measures we've talked about. We have to take these precautions, it's the law. For example, OSHA says we must make sure no one on the site is exposed to more than two-tenths of a fiber per cubic centimeter of air, averaged over an 8-hour shift. This is called the permissible exposure limit (PEL) for asbestos. Short-term exposure can be dangerous too. No one may be exposed to more than 1 fiber per cubic centimeter of air during any 30-minute period. We always try to keep asbestos exposure as low as possible, since no one is sure how much is safe. I have a Checklist of the OSHA regulations on asbestos. If you'd like to know more, see me after the meeting.

Company Rules:

Besides the OSHA regulations, we have some additional company rules about asbestos.

Discuss company rules:

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Comments from the Crew:

Ask the following: Do you have any other concerns about asbestos? Do you see any problems on our job? (Let the steward answer first, if there is one.) What about other jobs you've worked on? Have you had any experience with asbestos that might help us work safer on this job?

## **GENERAL SAFETY REVIEW**

This is a time to review all safety concerns, not just today's topic. Keep your notes on this page before, during and after the safety meeting.

Are you aware of any safety hazards from any other crews? Point out any hazards other crews are creating that this crew should know about. Tell the crew what you intend to do about those hazards.

Do we have any other safety business? Discuss any past issues or problems. Report any progress of investigations and action taken.

Have there been any accidents, near misses or complaints? Discuss any accidents, near misses, and complaints that have happened since the last safety meeting. Also recognize the safety contributions made by members of the crew.

Please remember, we want to hear from you about any health and safety issues that come up. If we don't know about problems, we can't take action to fix them.

## **ENDING THE MEETING**

Circulate Sign-Off Form.

Assign one or more crew member(s) to help with next safety meeting.

Refer action items for follow-up.

Do you have any Safety Recommendations?

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Do you have any Job Specific Topics you would like us to discuss?

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Have you reviewed the M.S.D.S Sheet for this safety topic? Yes\_\_ No\_\_ N/A\_\_

Comments:

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## **SAFETY TALKS REVIEW**

Hazard Identification:

1. The company has a written safety and Health program that meets all OSHA requirements. It includes identification of asbestos hazards on the site, regular inspections, accident investigation, and correction of hazardous conditions.
2. All asbestos-containing materials (ACM) on the site have been identified.

List materials, trade names (if applicable), and where they are found on the site:

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OSHA requires that worker exposure be kept at or below 0.2 fibers of asbestos per cubic centimeter of air, as an 8-hour average. This is called the 8-hour permissible exposure limit (PEL). OSHA also requires that exposure be kept at or below 1.0 fibers/cc as an average during any 30-minute period called the excursion limit.

When exposure may be half the 8-hour PEL (i.e. 0.1 fibers/cc) or more, OSHA requires certain protective measures. This is called the action level.

1. Exposures, which may exceed the action level, have been identified and exposed workers have been provided with all the required training and medical surveillance.
2. Air monitoring is performed in any work location where asbestos may be at or above the action level.
3. Workers have been informed of the results of air monitoring performed on themselves, in their work area, and/or for their trade.

#### Hazard Communication and Training:

1. The company has a written Hazard Communication Program.
2. All workers have received basic Hazard Communication training.
3. Any and all workers who may be exposed to asbestos as a result of their work have received specific training in health effects, safe use, minimizing exposure, personal protective equipment, proper disposal, and emergency procedures.
4. For any new asbestos-containing products, containers are properly labeled.
5. Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDSs) are available on the site for all new asbestos-containing products used.
6. Workers know where to find MSDSs and how to understand them.
7. On multi-employer job sites, all employers and employees are informed about the nature of the asbestos-related work performed by any other employer.
8. There has been a pre-job safety conference on ACM hazards.
9. Only workers and supervisors who have written certification from an employer, stating that they have been trained, perform asbestos-related work involving over 100 sq.ft. of ACM, or work which will expose them to levels higher than the action level or excursion limit.

#### Personal Protective Equipment:

Personal protective equipment (PPE) must be provided by the company and used by workers if exposure may exceed the OSHA 8-hour PEL or 30-minute excursion limit. If personal protective equipment is worn, check that:

1. Full protective clothing, such as disposable coveralls (including head and shoe covers), is used to keep asbestos debris off workers' clothing.
2. If protective clothing is worn, it is properly stored (or disposed of) after completion of work, and is never taken home with workers.

Site procedures for changing, storing, disposing of, and/or laundering protective clothing and other work clothes:

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1. Change areas, showers, and clean lunch areas are provided for employees working where exposure exceeds the PEL.
  2. Respirators are worn when airborne concentrations may exceed the PEL or excursion limit.
  3. Respirators, cartridges, and replacement parts have been approved by the Mine Safety and Health Administration or the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH).
  4. Workers who wear respirators have been medically evaluated, fit-tested, and trained.
  5. If respirators are used on the site, the company has a written Respiratory Protection Program.
  6. Paper dust masks are not used to control exposure to asbestos.
  7. Any air purifying respirators are equipped with HEPA (High Efficiency Particulate Air) filters.
  8. When not in use, respirators are stored in protective bags and out of the work area.

#### Working With ACM:

1. Warning signs are posted at all approaches to regulated areas (where airborne asbestos may exceed the OSHA PEL or excursion limit). The signs are readable from 20 feet away.
2. ACM is kept wet during work (so fibers won't become airborne).
3. Hand-operated and power tools, which may produce a concentration of fibers exceeding the PEL, have local exhaust ventilation systems. High-speed abrasive disc saws are not used for ACM, unless they have local exhaust systems.
4. Compressed air is not used on ACM, or for cleaning where ACM is present.
5. Any vacuuming equipment is fitted with HEPA filters.

#### Waste:

1. All hazardous waste generated on the job has been identified. (ACM is considered hazardous waste if it contains greater than 1% asbestos and is friable or may become friable during disposal. Friable means it can be crumbled by hand pressure.)
2. Containers of asbestos waste are sealed, impermeable, and labeled.
3. Waste is disposed of at a hazardous waste landfill.
4. A manifest (shipment/disposal form) is completed, given to the hauler, and accompanies the waste to the landfill.



Specific ACM disposal procedures for this site:

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Working Near ACM:

If your crew isn't working with ACM but others at the job site are, then check that:

1. The contractor, workers, and supervisors on the job are certified to do asbestos work.
2. Warning signs have been posted around the regulated areas.
3. Waste is properly stored and labeled.
4. Workers in your crew have been notified about the asbestos job and informed of the potential hazards.
5. A copy of the OSHA Registration and Notification for the job is posted at the site.