

Asbestos in Schools

Why is asbestos in schools a concern?

Asbestos can be found in a wide variety building materials. For example floor tiles, linoleum, pipe insulation, ceiling tiles and wall plaster have all been documented to contain asbestos. Many of these building materials can be found in schools.

Intact, undisturbed asbestos-containing materials (ACM) generally do not pose a health risk. However, when these materials are damaged or disturbed, they release asbestos fibers into the air. Airborne asbestos fibers pose an increased health risk for lung cancer, mesothelioma and asbestosis.

What was done to address asbestos in schools?

In order to protect children from the health risks posed by ACM, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) was mandated by the Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act (AHERA) in 1986 to develop a program for managing asbestos in schools.

Who is regulated by AHERA?

AHERA regulates ACM in K-12 public and non-profit private schools, including charter schools and schools with religious affiliations. For schools that are renting or leasing space, it is their responsibility to inspect for ACM and implement a management plan, not the building owners.

How do schools in Minnesota comply with AHERA?

AHERA requires schools to do the following:

- Perform an initial inspection of ACM in all school facilities and to re-inspect these facilities every three years;
- Develop and maintain an asbestos management plan and keep a readily available copy at the school;
- Provide yearly notification to parent, teacher, and employee organizations regarding the school's asbestos management plan and any asbestos abatement actions taken or planned in the school;
- Designate a contact person to ensure the responsibilities of the school district or school are properly implemented;
- Visually inspect known or suspected ACM every six months;
- Ensure that Minnesota certified individuals perform inspections, prepare management plans and conduct asbestos abatement;
- Ensure that whenever greater than 3 linear feet or 3 square feet of ACM is disturbed the proper abatement action is carried out; and
- Provide custodial staff with asbestos-awareness training.

Where can I get more information about AHERA?

You may contact EPA's Region V office at 800-621-8431 or visit their AHERA web page at www.epa.gov/asbestos/pubs/asbestos_in_schools.html.

If you require this document in another format, such as large print, Braille, or cassette tape, call:
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