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Asbestos During Renovation/Construction FAQ

What is asbestos?

Asbestos is a naturally occurring fibrous material that was used extensively in hundreds of products because of its insulation, fire protection, and acoustical properties. Asbestos containing products were widely used in the construction of buildings and a majority of buildings (homes, schools, businesses, etc.) constructed prior to 1980 contain asbestos. A number of buildings at Rutgers were constructed with materials that contain asbestos.

How Do You Know if the Building Materials Contain Asbestos

Prior to maintenance, renovation and/or demolition work, all impacted building materials are inspected and sampled to detect if asbestos is present. If present, the asbestos containing materials are abated by a licensed abatement contractor prior to the work.

Are There Regulations That Govern Asbestos Removal Work?

Yes, all work is performed in accordance with federal EPA, OSHA, and State of NJ regulatory requirements.

Who Can Perform Asbestos Abatement Work?

Only licensed abatement contractors using trained and qualified workers and supervisors may perform the work. The NJ Department of Labor licenses these abatement contractors and permits abatement workers and supervisors.

How Do You Ensure that the Work is Performed Safely and in Compliance with the Regulations?

The New Jersey Department of Community Affairs (NJ DCA), regulates asbestos abatement in all educational facilities and public buildings. The NJ DCA trains and licenses independent Asbestos Safety Control Monitoring firms to design and plan asbestos abatement projects. The NJ DCA also trains and licenses the Asbestos Safety Technicians that independently monitor the permitted and approved asbestos abatement projects. The NJ DCA Compliance Inspectors conduct monitoring inspections of asbestos abatement jobs taking place in these facilities. For asbestos abatement projects that exceed established threshold quantities, such as the planned removal of more than 10 linear feet of pipe insulation or 25 square feet of surfacing materials, Rutgers contracts the services of an independent, NJ DCA licensed, Asbestos Safety Control Monitoring firm to design the Plans & Specifications for the removal project. These Plans & Specifications are then submitted to the NJ DCA for approval and an Asbestos Abatement Permit is issued by the NJ DCA to perform the work according to these approved Plans & Specifications. All asbestos abatement work is performed by an independent, licensed, asbestos abatement contractor adhering to these specific Plans & Specifications.

What Work Practices are Implemented to Protect the Building Occupants?

The following are the primary steps of an asbestos abatement project:

- All movable objects are relocated from the area.
- The asbestos abatement work area is isolated from the rest of the building by the construction of an asbestos abatement containment within the work area that completely seals the work area from the rest of the building. In some cases, these physical barriers may be constructed with plywood and include multiple layers of poly sheeting along with caulking and foaming all seams. The design of the containment is integral to the Plans & Specifications presented to the NJ DCA for approval prior to beginning work. All containment layers of construction are inspected by the independent, licensed, Asbestos Safety Technician that is onsite, daily, monitoring the project. Air-handling systems, vents, ductwork, and etc., are sealed within the work areas and isolated physically and mechanically from the rest of the building. The regulations require that specific detail and attention are designed into the project to ensure the integrity to these systems cannot be compromised.
- A three-stage decontamination unit is constructed by the abatement contractor and these units are for the workers and the inspectors to enter/exit the work areas. There is no other possible access point to the containment other than through these decontamination. Additionally, HEPA filtered air-filtration devices (AFD's) are employed within the work area to create and maintain a "negative pressure" environment within the containment. This simply means that specially designed air filtration units will exhaust, through a High Efficiency Particulate Air (HEPA) filter, air from the contained area to the outside. These units are used to prevent air from "back drafting" through the decontamination unit into other areas of the building.
- All asbestos abatement work is performed by a licensed Asbestos Abatement Contractor and monitored by the onsite, independent, licensed, Asbestos Safety Technician employed by the Asbestos Safety Control Monitoring firm that designed the asbestos abatement project.
- Once the asbestos-containing materials (ACM) have been removed, the area will be cleaned by wet wiping and HEPA vacuuming all surfaces within the containment area.
- A visual inspection is conducted by the Asbestos Safety Technician to ensure all visible asbestos and debris has been removed. If any material is found, the area is re-cleaned and re-inspected.
- An encapsulating sealant is applied to all surfaces from which the ACM has been removed to "lock down" any remaining microscopic fibers.
- Final air sampling is then conducted by the Asbestos Safety Technician. The regulated acceptable limit for these air samples are less than or equal to 0.01 fibers per cubic centimeter (f/cc) of air for PCM samples and less than or equal to 0.010 structures/cc for TEM samples. If the air sample is above the threshold limit, the area(s) are re-cleaned and then re-sampled.
- Once acceptable air levels are reached and the Asbestos Safety Technician inspections are complete, the completed inspection reports and air-test results are forwarded to the NJ DCA to review and issue a Certificate of Occupancy.

Will I be Informed about Asbestos Removal in my Building and Provided the Results of Air Sampling Conducted?

Yes, Rutgers notifies building occupants for all asbestos abatement work via departmental contacts. For buildings occupied during an asbestos abatement project, occupants must be provided written notification 20 business days before the start of the project. This written notification is posted on building entrances 7 calendar days before the start of the project. A Project Notification Memo will be provided and will include the details of the work to be performed, its location, the duration of the work, the dates/shift hours worked, and the contractors being used to perform/monitor the work.

If other sections of the building will be occupied during the abatement work, air-sampling and visual inspections outside the containment area is performed daily by the Asbestos Safety Technician monitoring the project to ensure the occupied areas of the building remain suitable for occupancy.

REHS will provide a completion memo at the end of the project that will include the results of the final air sampling clearance tests. A copy of this memo is also shared with the President of the AAUP for all work conducted in buildings occupied by AAUP members.