



## How do I recognize if ceiling tiles in my building contain asbestos?

Simply stated, even the most experience asbestos building inspector *CANNOT* identify which ceiling tiles contain asbestos. Representative samples of each type of ceiling tile or homogeneous material must be collected and analyzed by PLM.

Ceiling tiles differ in size (1x1, 2x2, 2x4, etc.) and patterns. Each type combination must be tested separately. Ceiling tiles are classified as miscellaneous suspect material by the EPA. The EPA does not establish a minimum sampling requirement for miscellaneous materials to confirm negative asbestos content but allow the building inspector to best utilize his training/experience for this purpose. Usually at least two samples of each type of ceiling tile are tested. AET recommends the collection of a minimum of 2-3 samples on each floor of your building.

**Replacement Tiles:** Careful inspection of the ceiling tiles within your drop ceiling system for replacement tiles is also essential. These tiles will be of the same size and possibly with a similar pattern. Replacement tiles must be tested separately and in sufficient quantity to confirm negative asbestos content.

**Special Use Areas:** Ceiling tiles in boiler rooms, mechanical rooms, electrical closets may be different than those found in office areas. These ceiling tiles may have been installed for their fire resistant properties and should be tested independently from office area tiles.

Asbestos containing ceiling tiles are regulated by the EPA and must be removed from a building prior to demolition or when disturbed by renovations. Ceiling tiles are friable and release asbestos fibers into the air when broken.

Movement of ceiling tiles to access building systems within the ceiling space abrades the edges of the tile; Again, fibers are released which settle onto office furnishings and floor surfaces below. AET recommends building maintenance activities involving ceiling tiles be performed after normal business hours and control/cleanup of resulting dust/debris be immediate. It is essential building owners/managers know if any of the ceiling tiles in their building contain asbestos.

**Conclusion:** Your best indication if the ceiling tiles in your building contain asbestos may be the date of construction of your building or date of installation of the tiles. Rarely are tiles installed after 1980 contain asbestos. However, AET recommends PLM testing of representative ceiling tiles to confirm/deny asbestos content.

**When you need professional help or advice**, email Alan Sutherland, CIH, CHMM at [a.sutherland@aetinc.biz](mailto:a.sutherland@aetinc.biz) or call 610-891-0114. We provide nationwide services; phone consultations are free. Check out the full range of environmental contracting/consulting services we provide at our website [www.aetinc.biz](http://www.aetinc.biz).

