



Fourteen Asbestos Awareness Tips For Maintenance/Custodial Workers

1. Asbestos is rarely found in originally installed building materials in facilities constructed after 1980. However, asbestos products can still be purchased for remodeling/repair projects such as joint compound, roofing materials, window glazings, caulks, etc. at local stores.
2. Check the product label for products used in your workplace. The term asbestos may not be used, but it may read magnesium silicate. OSHA Right-to-Know Laws require building owners to obtain Safety Data Sheets (SDS) on products used in their facilities.
3. Asbestos exposure occurs primarily by inhaling asbestos fibers when the asbestos containing material (ACM) is disturbed/damaged including improper cleanup of asbestos-containing dust or debris.
4. Once inhaled, asbestos fibers can travel deep into the lungs and cause asbestos diseases including lung cancer. These diseases are progressive and can take 10-30 years to develop.
5. Smoking has a proven cause and effect relationship to induce/accelerate asbestos disease. Your best prevention **STOP SMOKING.**
6. To confirm asbestos content in a building material, bulk samples must be collected and analyzed microscopically. Workers are warned to treat suspect building materials as ACM until testing confirms/denies the asbestos content. AET's lab can collect and analyze these samples.
7. Improper cleanup of asbestos-containing dust/debris can release high airborne asbestos exposure levels. Do not dry sweep, use compressed air or use general maintenance "shop" vacuums for cleaning asbestos-containing surface dust.
8. Vacuums equipped with HEPA filters and wet cleaning methods are required for proper dust/debris cleanup. HEPA vacuum use will normally require bringing in an outside asbestos licensed contractor.
9. Respirator use is the last line of defense to protect yourself from asbestos. However, don't put on a respirator **UNLESS**, respirators are selected, used, fitted and maintained properly. You must be medically evaluated by a licensed physician prior to being issued a respirator and a respiratory protection plan developed.
10. Filter respirators provide **NO PROTECTION** against other environmental contaminants in your workplace (such as acids or organic vapors). Filter respirators provide no protection in life and death situations such as confined space entry or oxygen deficient environments.
11. Asbestos dust contamination on worker clothing has proven to result in asbestos disease to worker's family members during laundering. Work clothing must be kept clean and disposable coveralls worn in dusty environments where contact with clothing is likely.
12. Asbestos is not absorbed through the skin but can cause skin irritation and asbestos warts. Workers must follow good personal hygiene practices (such as washing hands) after working in contact with ACM. Do not eat, drink or smoke in asbestos areas.
13. Ask your building manager if an asbestos identification survey has been performed in your facility to determine the presence, location and quantity of ACM. Have labels or signs been posted in mechanical spaces and other ACM areas? Identify your work tasks which may require you to contact or be in close proximity to ACM.
14. Notify your building manager of any observed damage to identified ACM. Check on outside trade contractors who may cause disturbance. Ensure you have the proper knowledge, training and controls to prevent asbestos exposure to all building occupants.

About our organization: AET has 31 years of environmental contracting/consulting experience assisting our clients in facility planning, design, construction, renovation and maintenance issues. Real life solutions and cost savings recommendations are AET's objectives to every environmental investigation. Make AET your first point of contact for your environmental consulting/contracting needs. Call us now at 610-891-0114 or 1-800-9696-AET.

Need Asbestos Awareness Training for your Building Maintenance/Custodial Staff.... email Alan Sutherland, CIH, CHMM at a.sutherland@aetinc.biz. We provide nationwide services; phone consultations are free. Check out the full range of environmental contracting/consulting services we provide at our website at www.aetinc.biz.