

## What is asbestos?

Asbestos is the common name for a group of naturally occurring mineral fibers that are known for their high tensile strength and thermal insulating properties. It is commonly found in a variety of building construction materials and products. Examples include:

Heating system insulation  
Spray-applied insulation  
Vinyl floor tiles  
Vinyl sheet flooring  
Ceiling tiles  
Adhesives and construction mastics  
Roofing paper and shingles  
Cement siding shingles  
Plaster and joint compound  
Vermiculite

## Why is asbestos a problem?

When asbestos is disturbed, it can break down into microscopic fibers that may become airborne. Once airborne, these fibers can be inhaled and trapped in the lungs, posing a health threat. Breathing asbestos can cause respiratory diseases including asbestosis, lung cancer, and mesothelioma, a fatal cancer of the chest cavity lining.

## How should asbestos be managed to minimize health risks?

The greatest potential for exposure to asbestos fibers now occurs when asbestos-containing building materials are disturbed during either building renovations or demolitions. All building owners – residential and commercial – should be aware of what steps should be taken to properly identify and address asbestos hazards in structures prior to beginning any work that might disturb asbestos-containing materials.

For More Information:

On asbestos management and control in Maryland, please contact:

Asbestos Program  
Maryland Department of the  
Environment  
1800 Washington Blvd., Suite 725  
Baltimore, MD 21230-1720  
(410) 537-3200  
1-800-633-6101

<http://www.mde.state.md.us/Programs/AirPrograms/Asbestos/index.asp>

At the federal level:

EPA Region III  
1650 Arch Street (3WC32)  
Philadelphia, PA 19103  
[www.epa.gov/region03](http://www.epa.gov/region03)



[www.mde.state.md.us](http://www.mde.state.md.us)



## Renovation, Demolition & Asbestos

**What Local  
Government,  
Building Owners  
and Contractors in  
Maryland Should  
Know**



Damaged asbestos pipe  
insulation



2010  
Maryland Department of the  
Environment

## **What are the requirements for building renovation and demolition projects?**

### **Inspection**

Federal and State regulations require each owner or operator of a “facility” to inspect the building for presence of asbestos prior to any building renovation or demolition project. (A “facility” is roughly defined as any commercial, public, government, or industrial structure, as well as a group of single-family private residences being demolished for commercial purposes. As a rule, single-family homes are exempt from Federal, but not State regulations). **For renovations**, the primary concern is asbestos that could be disturbed during the renovation. This must be removed prior to any asbestos disturbance, by a licensed asbestos contractor). Licensed asbestos contractors can be found on MDE’s website at [http://www.mde.state.md.us/assets/document/licensed\\_contractors.pdf](http://www.mde.state.md.us/assets/document/licensed_contractors.pdf)

Please note, however, that most inspections are non-destructive. When a building is completely gutted, hidden asbestos, such as asbestos-insulated pipes in chases, is often exposed. When this happens, work **MUST** stop, and a licensed asbestos contractor must remove the asbestos before any work continues. Some of the worst violations in MDE’s history have occurred in this fashion. **For demolitions**, all asbestos, excepting vinyl asbestos floor tiles or asphalt-based roofing materials, must be removed by a licensed asbestos contractor prior to demolition. Single-family homeowners should look for thermal insulation and shingles. Thermal insulation must be removed before demolition by a licensed contractor; shingles can be removed by the owner.

### **Notification**

There is no requirement to notify MDE of any renovation activity **UNLESS** it involves the disturbance/removal of asbestos. The *asbestos* contractor is then responsible for notifying MDE.

In the case of demolitions, of facilities, ALL must be notified to MDE and EPA Region III, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in writing, regardless of the presences or absence of asbestos. The addresses are available on the back of this brochure. If there is no asbestos, notification is the responsibility of the owner or general contractor. If asbestos is involved, again, notification is the responsibility of the asbestos contractor. (For MDE’s purposes, a demolition involves the removal of load-bearing structures. An internal gutting, no matter how extensive, is a renovation.) A copy of our standard notification form is available on website at [http://www.mde.state.md.us/Programs/AirPrograms/Asbestos/Asbestos\\_Forms/index.asp](http://www.mde.state.md.us/Programs/AirPrograms/Asbestos/Asbestos_Forms/index.asp) or by calling Tim O’Hare at (410) 537-3200. For private residences, there is no requirement for notification unless asbestos (excluding shingles) is removed, and that is again the asbestos contractor’s responsibility that you have hired.

**Local governments** - all demolitions of commercial/residential buildings with 4 or more units are required to notify MDE at least 10 days prior to demolition. Notification should be done by using the standard notification form MDE 259. This form must be filled out and sent to the address on the back of this brochure. Fax or e-mails are **unacceptable**.

### **Obtaining Permits**

Depending on where you live in Maryland, you may need to obtain a local government permit or a Municipality permit for renovation and demolition work. Check with your local government office.