

The Danger of Asbestos in Schools

/EINPresswire.com/ 01/18/2013 //
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[Asbestos](#) was commonly used in schools as insulation and in building materials, such as drywall, floor/ceiling tile, applied fireproofing spray, and piping/boiler insulation. Undisturbed asbestos materials generally do not pose a health risk to students and teachers. However, over time asbestos materials can become hazardous due to deterioration or damage.



If asbestos containing materials are disturbed, (e.g. during the installation, maintenance, or removal process), asbestos fibers may become airborne and pose a health threat to students, teachers and other employees within the schools. Once asbestos fibers are inhaled or swallowed, the risk of getting an asbestos related disease, such as asbestosis or [mesothelioma](#), also increases. Student exposure to asbestos in schools is particularly concerning because once the fibers accumulate in the lungs, the latency period between asbestos exposure and the onset of symptoms can take as long as 20 to 50 years.

The federal government has been regulating the use of asbestos in schools since the 1980's. Schools now have regulatory requirements and management plans to reduce the risk of potential asbestos exposure for students and teachers. However, until the presence of asbestos in schools is eliminated entirely, many believe it will continue to pose a health risk.

Parents, teachers, students, and service workers have the right to inspect the school's asbestos management plans. It is important to learn about the school's response actions, the location of asbestos within the school, and any action taken to repair or remove the asbestos-containing material. As part of schools asbestos management plan, they are required to make certain information publicly available, including, but not limited to:

Blueprints that identify the location of any asbestos-containing materials that remain in the school;

A description of the planned response action in the event of asbestos materials being disturbed;

The preventive measures taken to reduce asbestos exposure;

A report of steps taken to inform workers, teachers, and students about inspections, and re-inspections;

A copy of the analysis of any building material being tested.

Although progress is being made to limit the uses of asbestos and to identify the hazardous materials in schools, one of the most important things you can do as a parent, teacher, or student is to stay up-to-date on your school's asbestos conditions. For more information contact the asbestos hotline at (800) 471-7127. You can also visit EPA's website at <http://www.epa.gov/asbestos/schools.html>

Sources:

<http://www.epa.gov/asbestos/schools.html>

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