

# Asbestos Hazards: Release Response

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Inhaling or ingesting asbestos fibers can cause lung diseases and cancer. Ideally, we identify asbestos-containing materials and then either leave them intact or work on them with controls in place to prevent exposure. When there is an asbestos fiber release, everyone must know what to do to minimize the impact on the health of people in the area.

## Asbestos Fiber Release

Assume that asbestos is in building, friction and heat-resistant materials that were installed before 1981.

Asbestos releases occur because:

- People aren't trained to recognize when asbestos is likely to be present
- People don't understand the danger of asbestos fibers
- People accidentally disturb asbestos-containing materials that they intended to leave intact
- Demolition uncovers previously hidden asbestos-containing materials
- Controls (engineering, administrative or personal protective equipment) fail

A **minor release** is < 3 linear or square feet (0.28 linear or square meters) of asbestos-containing material. A **major release** is ≥ 3 linear or square feet (0.28 linear or square meters) of asbestos-containing material.

When ANY asbestos release occurs, our goal is to minimize the spread of fibers and keep people safe.

**NOTE:** Check applicable regulations and company policies and follow them. When in doubt, follow the more stringent requirements.

For a **minor release** of < 3 linear or square feet (0.28 linear or square meters) of asbestos-containing material:

1. Stop work.
2. Evacuate the area, closing doors behind you.
3. Place contaminated clothing/equipment in sealed and labeled bags/containers.
4. Clean yourself with soap and water before donning clean clothes.
5. Post signs warning.

Alert your supervisor about the asbestos release. Only qualified professionals should work in the release area to remove the asbestos. Your supervisor will decide if your training qualifies you to clean up the release.

For a **major release** of ≥ 3 linear or square feet (0.28 linear or square meters) of asbestos-containing material, follow the same procedure for a minor release and isolate the area:

- Restrict airflow from the release site (shut down or seal HVAC systems)
- Prevent access by erecting temporary barriers with signs on them

The people who are qualified to respond to a major release may have more extensive training than those who may respond to a minor release. They are often asbestos and hazardous material specialists.

After ANY asbestos release, do not re-enter the area until you are instructed to do so by your supervisor. The area is not safe until your supervisor verifies that the cleanup was successful.

### First Aid and Medical Attention

If it's possible that you...	Then, immediately...
got asbestos in your eyes	flush them with water for 15 minutes
got asbestos on your skin	wash with soap and water
inhaled asbestos	move to fresh air
ingested asbestos	rinse your mouth thoroughly and then drink water; do NOT induce vomiting

After you take these initial steps, **get medical attention as soon as possible** so that your doctor can assess and monitor you.