



Emergency Asbestos Debris Management Following a Disaster

Office of Air Quality

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Description:

- The handling of asbestos-contaminated waste is an important health and environmental issue following a disaster such as a tornado, high winds, hail storm, earthquake, fires, flood, ice storm, or explosion.
- Asbestos is a naturally occurring mineral composed of fibrous mineral silicates. It is fireproof and almost chemically inert. Because of these characteristics, it was commonly used in: pipe insulation, fireproofing insulation, fibrous cement components, acoustical plasters (sound proofing), ceiling tiles, exterior siding, roof shingles, floor tile, mastics and several other building components.
- Asbestos-containing materials are more likely to be found in buildings constructed prior to 1975.
- When asbestos-containing material is broken, sawed, drilled, or otherwise disturbed, microscopic asbestos fibers may be released that remain airborne indefinitely and may travel long distances.
- Asbestos fibers can break away from building products through natural decay or from some sort of disturbance, including maintenance activities, demolition or renovation activities, or a natural disaster.
- Activities related to returning to homes and businesses after a natural disaster may pose an increased risk of exposure to asbestos fibers. This is due to fibers being released from asbestos-containing building products during the event, during cleanup activities, and during demolition or renovation of damaged homes and buildings.

Environmental Impacts:

- Once released into the environment, asbestos fibers may pose serious health problems as the microscopic fibers may enter the respiratory system where they can accumulate and lay dormant for long periods of time, causing cancer and other health issues.
- There is no known safe level of asbestos exposure; even low-levels can potentially cause serious health problems including:
 - Asbestosis - a scarring of the lungs causing increasingly labored breathing, which can lead to death
 - Mesothelioma - a cancer of the lining of the lungs and the abdominal cavity
 - Lung cancer

IDEM's Role:

- IDEM is responsible for protecting human health and the environment while providing for the safe industrial, agricultural, commercial and governmental operations vital to a prosperous economy.
- IDEM will provide technical assistance and guidance to commercial building owners concerning compliance with 326 IAC 14-10 (the state rule for asbestos work practices) during the cleanup or removal of asbestos-containing building materials.
- The provisions of 326 IAC 14-10 do not pertain to private individuals who own residential buildings with 4 or fewer living units. Regardless of this fact, IDEM will provide assistance to these individuals regarding proper management of asbestos-containing materials during cleanup, demolition, renovation and disposal activities.

- Upon request, IDEM will provide lists of Indiana Licensed Inspectors and Asbestos Abatement Contractors.

Citizen's Role:

To minimize exposure to asbestos after a natural disaster such as a tornado, citizens should:

- Consult local environmental health and solid waste management authorities for information about asbestos-containing materials and the proper handling and disposal of such materials.
- Not approach damaged buildings unless the structure is determined to be safe by local authorities.
- Use caution and wear appropriate safety gear (gloves, work shoes, eye protection, dust mask) when handling any building debris.
- Contact local health officials immediately to report suspected asbestos-containing material and avoid the vicinity of the suspect materials.
- Citizens who must undertake cleanup activities on their property should follow all of the following steps to minimize potential exposure to asbestos:
 - Only disturb construction materials that must be removed, and minimize any excess breakage, to prevent the release of dust and fibers into the air;
 - Wet any materials suspected to contain asbestos to minimize dust;
 - When conducting demolition, notify the appropriate state/local building authority before beginning.
- Do not burn suspect asbestos-containing building products.
- Contact local landfill or transfer station to determine proper disposal requirements and follow those guidelines.

Local Official's Role:

- Local officials should discuss possible asbestos contamination with property owners of older buildings where asbestos is known by officials to be present or suspected based on the building age.
- Local officials should pay particular attention to factories and schools, both occupied and unoccupied, due to the increased possibility of the presence of asbestos.
- Local officials should encourage property owners to contact IDEM for assistance.
- Local officials should contact IDEM, as necessary, for technical guidance and compliance assistance, or to request a visit by an IDEM representative who can provide onsite technical assistance and identify applicable regulatory requirements.

Additional Information:

- For technical and compliance assistance, contact either of these IDEM offices:
 - The Asbestos Licensing Program in IDEM's Office of Air Quality at (317) 233-3861, or (800) 451-6027, ext. 3-3861. Ask for an Asbestos Licensing Manager.
 - The Air Compliance Section in IDEM's Office of Air Quality at (317) 233-1136 or (800) 451-6027, ext. 3-1136. Ask for an Asbestos Compliance Manager.
- Find information online by visiting the following websites:
 - www.idem.IN.gov/asbestos/2339.htm to find the IDEM asbestos inspectors for your area.
 - www.idem.IN.gov/asbestos/2328.htm for information on work procedures, licensing and waste handling.
 - www.idem.IN.gov/asbestos/ for asbestos technical guidance documents, including "Handling and Disposal Requirements" and "Handling and Disposal Requirements for Homeowners."
 - www.IN.gov/legislative/iac or www.IN.gov/legislative/iac/T03260/A00140.PDF for the state rule for asbestos work practices (326 IAC 14-10).