

What you should know about asbestos if you're building or remodeling

It's a common misconception that asbestos is usually found only in buildings constructed prior to 1970. Asbestos is still being manufactured today, and by law it can be used in many building materials, such as exterior siding insulation, ceiling and floor tile, wallboard, duct work and even textured paint. Though asbestos is generally believed to be safe if left undisturbed, repairs, remodeling or demolition can result in the release of microscopic fibers of asbestos into the air. Breathing asbestos fibers has been linked to serious lung diseases and cancer.

Before major repairs, remodeling or demolition, Texas law requires that any public building must be inspected for asbestos before work can begin. If asbestos is found, the Texas Department of Health must be notified. The requirement applies to any commercial building with public access, including office buildings, shopping centers, apartments, hotels, schools, stores, restaurants and other business establishments. Violation of any portion of the Texas Asbestos Health Protection ACT (TAHPA) can result in fines of up to \$10,000 a day.

REQUIREMENTS

Building owners and contractors must take the following steps to ensure compliance with state asbestos regulations. (Homes and apartments with fewer than four units are excluded from these requirements unless part of a larger project.)

- Determine **if and how much asbestos** is present at the site. Building owners and contractors are responsible for making sure that a thorough asbestos survey is completed by a licensed inspector.
- Hire only **licensed asbestos professionals** to perform asbestos-related activities on public buildings. A list of licensed asbestos inspectors and asbestos removal contractors is available from the Texas Department of Health, Toxic Substances Control Division/Asbestos Programs Branch.
- Notify the Texas Department of Health Toxic Substances Control Division/Asbestos Programs Branch of your intention **to demolish a public building or facility**. Notification is required for any demolition, whether or not asbestos has been identified.
- Notify the Texas Department of Health Toxic Substances Control Division/Asbestos Programs Branch of your intention **to abate any amount of asbestos**. You must submit your notification at least 10 working days before the project start date. Besides the scheduled start and completion dates, you'll need to identify the type of project (demolition or renovation), location of the site, names of the operators or asbestos removal contractors, methods of removal and amount of asbestos involved.
- Get the **required two-page notification** form from the Texas Department of Health, Toxic Substances Control Division/Asbestos Program Branch.

PENALTIES

State health inspectors have the authority to enter any areas to determine compliance with the regulations of the Texas Asbestos Health Protection Act. In addition, violations can result in a fine of up to \$10,000 a day. As long as the violation continues, each day is considered a separate violation.

Learn more about the Texas Asbestos Health Protection Act and the health risks associated with asbestos by calling 1-800-572-5548, or visit www.dshs.state.tx.us/asbestos

Additional information and support can be obtained by calling the TDH Regional office.

Austin Address:

Texas Department of Health Toxic Substances Control Division,
Asbestos Programs Branch
1100 W. 49th Street
Austin, Texas 78756
(512) 834-6610, Fax: (512) 834-6644