

## ***Where are Asbestos-Containing Materials on this campus?***

Materials that may contain asbestos are, by law, presumed to be present in all buildings constructed prior to 1980. That presumption applies to all campus buildings except South Hall and the new Residence Complex. South Hall and the new Residence Complex were constructed after 1980.

Asbestos-containing materials have been confirmed to be present in most pre-1980 buildings located on the SUNY Geneseo campus. The content of most of these materials has been analytically determined to range from 2% to 5% asbestos fibers.

Asbestos containing building materials on the campus include:

- fireproofing on structural steel
- pipe, boiler, and tank thermal insulation
- roofing felt and mastics
- wall and ceiling plasters
- vinyl floor tile, mastic and basecove
- ceiling tile adhesives
- caulking and glazing compound
- lab fume hoods and exhaust ducts
- elevator and fire-rated door filler material
- laboratory gloves and insulations

Any discovery damage or deterioration of these materials should be reported to EHS (5512).

## ***Does living or working in a building with Asbestos-Containing Materials pose a Health Hazard?***

Not according to the EPA who issued the following statement:

***“Intact and undisturbed asbestos materials do not pose a health risk. The mere presence of asbestos in a building does not mean that the health of the building occupants is endangered. When asbestos-containing materials are properly managed, release of asbestos fibers into the air is prevented or minimized, and the risk of asbestos-related diseases can be reduced to a negligible level.”***

Source: EPA July 1990, 20T-2003.

✓ By knowing where asbestos containing building materials are likely to be located and taking measures to avoid disturbing these materials, unintentional releases can be avoided.

Notifications are posted at entrances to all campus buildings identifying materials that have been proven to be non-asbestos containing.

**All other building materials must be managed as if they contained asbestos.**

## **Information for Your Safety:**

# **Asbestos Containing Materials in Campus Buildings**

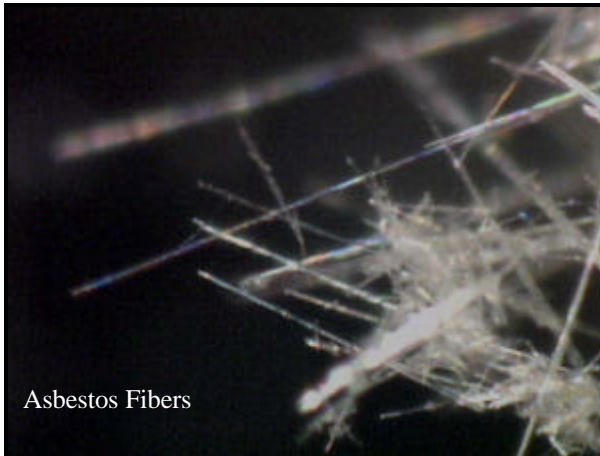
- What is it?
- Where is it?
- Is it a Health Risk?
- Why is it in campus buildings?



## What is Asbestos?

Asbestos is a common name for a group of naturally occurring mineral fibers. Asbestos is not combustible, has good thermal, sound and electrical insulating properties, good frictional properties and is moderately resistant to chemicals. Because of these properties, adding asbestos to other products can improve their durability, flexibility, strength and resistance to heat and wear. Prior to awareness of its potential health problems, asbestos was added to a over 3500 different products, including many building materials. Although most of these materials were banned in the 1970s, asbestos can still be used in certain products such as brake linings and floor tiles.

**Left undisturbed, materials that contain asbestos do not pose a health risk. The asbestos fibers are bound or sealed within the materials and cannot become airborne.**



Asbestos Fibers

The diameter of an asbestos fiber is approximately 1/1,000 that of a human hair, yet each fiber has the strength of a piano wire!

The Ancient Greeks gave the soft, fiber-like mineral the name "asbestos", which means "inextinguishable" or "indestructible".

## Is Asbestos hazardous?

Individuals who were exposed to high levels of airborne asbestos over extended periods of time have higher incidents of illnesses including lung cancer, asbestosis, a disease which scars lung tissue, and mesothelioma, a rare cancer of the lung cavity lining. These individuals were typically involved in asbestos-related industries prior to the regulation of asbestos, or had family members that were so employed (asbestos fibers were brought home on the clothing of workers). The incidence of lung cancer was greatly increased among these individuals who also smoked cigarettes.

Asbestos is a health hazard only when its small, needle-like fibers become airborne, are inhaled, and deposited within the lungs.

Airborne Asbestos Fiber Measurements in Various Locations	
Location	fibers/cubic centimeter
Unregulated workplaces (historical)	20+
OSHA threshold for workplaces	0.1
Typical building with asbestos-containing materials	0.0009
High outside air readings	0.0007
Outside air	0.0004

*Source: The Asbestos Institute*

Airborne levels of asbestos fibers in a typical building with asbestos-containing materials are tens of thousands of times less than the historical occupational exposures associated with the higher incidents of asbestos-related

***The EPA has stated that at low airborne levels, the risk for asbestos-related disease may be negligible or zero.***

***By law, all building materials in any building constructed prior to 1980 are presumed to contain asbestos until specific analytical and sampling protocols prove otherwise.***

## Asbestos in Building Materials

versus

### Asbestos Fibers in the Air

The presence of asbestos in building materials does not pose a health hazard - the asbestos fibers are bound or sealed within the materials. Bound fibers cannot be inhaled. It is only airborne fibers that can be inhaled or ingested.

Disturbing an asbestos-containing building material, is a highly regulated activity because the disturbance may allow the previously bound fibers to become airborne.

The types of disturbances or activities that could cause fibers to become airborne include:

- drilling
- sanding
- cutting
- demolition of any type

These activities are prohibited in any building materials, unless proven to be non-asbestos containing or if conducted by certified personnel adhering to numerous federal and state protocols.

### History of Asbestos Use

Asbestos was used in pottery as early as the Stone Age. The Greeks, who referred to asbestos as the "miracle mineral", wove asbestos into cloth much like cotton. The Romans cleaned their asbestos table cloths by throwing them onto the flames of a fire. The Roman naturalist Pliny the Elder, was also the first to note increased illnesses among those that worked with asbestos.

Asbestos was not available in large amounts until extensive deposits were discovered in Canada in the late 1800's. Asbestos use in the United States peaked at 795,000 metric Tons in 1973. By 1990, asbestos use in the United States had fallen to 55,000 metric Tons.