Toolbox talk: asbestos awareness

29 CFR 1926.1101, 1910.1001

Date _____ Trainer _____ Location _____

Opening question

If you were about to drill into old pipe insulation or pull up old floor tile, how would you know if it had asbestos in it?

Why it matters

Asbestos is still in many older buildings, in insulation, flooring, roofing and other materials. Disturbing it can release fibers too small to see, and you can breathe them in without knowing it. Those fibers can cause lung cancer, mesothelioma and asbestosis, often many years later, and smoking makes the lung cancer risk worse. You cannot tell asbestos by looking at it, so if you are not sure, stop and ask.

Key points

1 Know where asbestos hides

In buildings constructed no later than 1980, thermal system insulation on pipes, boilers and ducts, and sprayed or troweled-on surfacing like fireproofing and acoustical plaster, are presumed to contain asbestos (29 CFR 1926.1101(b)). Asphalt and vinyl flooring installed no later than 1980 must also be considered asbestos-containing unless an industrial hygienist determines it is not (29 CFR 1926.1101(k)(1)(i) and (g)(8)(i)(I)). Wallboard, roofing, siding, mastics and gaskets can contain it too.

29 CFR 1926.1101(b)

2 Find out before you start

Before work begins, building owners must determine where asbestos-containing material is and how much is there, and employers must identify it in the areas where their crews will work (29 CFR 1926.1101(k)(2)(i) and (k)(3)(i)). Ask for that information before you cut, drill, sand or tear out anything in an older building. If you find material that might be asbestos and nobody told you about it, stop and tell your supervisor. Employers who discover asbestos-containing material on a site must tell the owner and the other employers there within 24 hours (29 CFR 1926.1101(k)(4)).

29 CFR 1926.1101(k)(3)(i)

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3 Never dry sweep, blow off or sand it

In construction, dry sweeping, shoveling or other dry cleanup of asbestos dust and debris is prohibited (29 CFR 1926.1101(g)(3)(iii)). Compressed air may not be used to remove asbestos unless an enclosed ventilation system captures the dust cloud (29 CFR 1926.1101(g)(3)(ii)), and sanding asbestos flooring is prohibited (29 CFR 1926.1101(l)(3)(ii)). The rule calls for wet methods and HEPA-filtered vacuums instead, with waste going into leak-tight containers right away (29 CFR 1926.1101(g)(1)).

29 CFR 1926.1101(g)(3)(iii)

4 Stay out of regulated areas

All Class I, II and III asbestos work must be done inside regulated areas, marked with warning signs and limited to authorized persons (29 CFR 1926.1101(e)(1), (e)(3) and (k)(7)(i)). Employees must not eat, drink, smoke, chew tobacco or gum, or apply cosmetics in a regulated area (29 CFR 1926.1101(e)(5)). If you see asbestos warning signs or plastic barriers, stay out unless you are trained and authorized. Where respirators are required, filtering facepiece respirators, the disposable kind, must not be used against asbestos fibers (29 CFR 1926.1101(h)(3)(i)(A)).

29 CFR 1926.1101(e)(1)

5 Only trained workers do asbestos work

In construction, each employee who performs Class I through IV asbestos work, or who is likely to be exposed above a permissible exposure limit, must be trained at no cost, before or at initial assignment and at least annually after that (29 CFR 1926.1101(k)(9)(i) and (k)(9)(ii)). Even Class IV work, where maintenance and custodial workers contact but do not disturb asbestos, requires a course of at least 2 hours (29 CFR 1926.1101(b) and (k)(9)(vi)). This talk does not qualify anyone to remove, repair or disturb asbestos.

29 CFR 1926.1101(k)(9)(i)

Scenario

Picture this: Your crew is remodeling an older office building. To run new conduit, an electrician starts cutting through old pipe insulation above the ceiling, and white dust drifts down onto the floor. A laborer grabs a broom to sweep it up before lunch. What should both of them do right now, and what should have happened before anyone touched that insulation?

Crew discussion

1. Which buildings or materials on our jobs could contain asbestos?
2. Who do we ask for the owner's asbestos information before we start work?
3. What would you do if you uncovered material that might be asbestos in the middle of a job?
4. Why are a broom and a regular shop vacuum the wrong tools for asbestos dust?

Bottom line **If you are not sure whether something contains asbestos, do not touch it, stop work and ask.**

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Sign-in sheet / Hoja de asistencia

Topic / Tema Asbestos awareness / Conciencia sobre el asbesto

Date / Fecha

Trainer / Instructor

Location / Lugar

Company / Empresa

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