



Lincoln-Lancaster County  
Health Department

## Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department Air Quality Program

### Asbestos General Information Fact Sheet

#### What is asbestos?

- Asbestos is a naturally occurring mineral mined throughout the world, primarily in Canada, China, and parts of the United States and South America. Asbestos was known as the “miracle mineral” due to its durability, strength and ability to withstand heat. Asbestos can be broken into small, unseen fibers that remain airborne indefinitely and travel long distances. Asbestos has been used in over 3,000 commercial products such as:
  - Pipe and boiler insulation
  - Sprayed-on acoustical and decorative textures
  - Vinyl floor tile and linoleum
  - Cementitious, transite, or slate siding and roofing
- Asbestos is being replaced in these products with other materials when possible. However, you can still purchase products that contain asbestos such as vinyl asbestos floor tile and brake pads. Many materials that contain asbestos are being removed from existing buildings and are being replaced with materials that do not contain asbestos.

#### What are the health risks associated with asbestos?

- **There is no known safe level of asbestos exposure.** Inhalation of asbestos fibers is the most significant health concern.
- Damaged asbestos-containing material is more likely to release fibers than asbestos material that is not damaged. If asbestos-containing material is dry and can be crumbled by hand pressure (referred to as “friable”) a fiber release is more likely than if the material is “nonfriable”. The more that the asbestos material is disturbed; the more likely a fiber release will occur. When a release occurs, the small fibers may be inhaled and become deposited into the airways and lungs. Due to the physical characteristics of asbestos, the fibers may remain in the respiratory system indefinitely. Each asbestos exposure increases your risk of developing an asbestos related disease.
- Diseases from asbestos exposure may not appear for 10-20 years or more after exposure. Mesothelioma is a fatal form of cancer caused by asbestos exposure. It is a cancer of the membranes that line the chest and abdomen. Asbestosis is scarring of the lung tissue caused by asbestos fibers. This is a non-cancerous, respiratory disease that is irreversible. Asbestos exposure may also cause lung cancer. Workers who smoke and are exposed to asbestos are 50 times more likely to develop lung cancer than the general public. The risks associated with low-level, non-occupational exposure have not been established and are almost impossible to validate.

#### Who regulates asbestos?

- In 1973, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA) developed the ‘National Emission Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants for Asbestos’ (Asbestos NESHAP) for the purposes of protecting the general public from asbestos exposure. The Asbestos NESHAP regulations apply to renovations and demolitions of commercial, public, industrial, and institutional facilities; asbestos manufacturing; milling; roadways; and disposal. Residential buildings having four or fewer dwelling units are exempt from most of the NESHAP regulations. The regulations specify notification requirements, work practices and disposal requirements.
- The Nebraska Department of Environment and Energy (NDEE) has been delegated the authority to oversee compliance with the Asbestos NESHAP regulations. The Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department (LLCHD) is responsible for the Asbestos NESHAP program in Lancaster County. The Omaha Air Quality Control (OAQC) agency is responsible for the program within the Omaha city limits.
- The US EPA developed the Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA), which first authorized the US EPA to develop the Asbestos Hazardous Emergency Response Act (AHERA) in 1986. The AHERA regulations set standards for inspections and management plans for asbestos in schools. The AHERA regulations necessitate training and accreditation for those who work with asbestos. Currently, the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (NE DHHS) oversees the AHERA program.

**If you have any questions about the rules and regulations pertaining to asbestos removal or disposal, please call the LLCHD Air Quality Program at (402) 441-8040.**

- The NE DHHS has developed regulations for the State of Nebraska found in Title 178, Chapter 22 of the Nebraska Administrative Code (178 NAC 22). These regulations are in addition to the NESHAP and AHERA regulations that must be complied with by regulated parties in Nebraska. The regulations set forth in 178 NAC 22 specify accreditation, licensure, work practices, notification, audits, inspections and fees for asbestos projects.
- The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has developed regulations that protect asbestos workers. Employers must follow specific work practices and guidelines to insure minimal exposure for their employees in the asbestos industry. The federal government manages the OSHA asbestos regulations for Nebraska.

**How do I properly dispose of asbestos-containing waste materials?**

- The LLCHD Air Quality Program’s [Asbestos Disposal Procedures](#) provide details on how to properly package and label asbestos-containing waste materials, and where to take the waste materials for final disposal. The document also contains an ‘Asbestos Waste Shipment Record’ form, which must be filled out and provided to the solid waste disposal site (landfill) where the asbestos-containing waste is being disposed of.

**Where can I get more information on asbestos removal regulations?**

- If you have not yet removed the asbestos-containing materials from the structure you’re working on, call (402) 441-8040 to find out more about proper asbestos removal procedures. You can also review our ‘[Asbestos Regulations](#)’ sheet for more information on the rules regarding asbestos removal and disposal.
- You can also find more information on asbestos from the EPA’s asbestos page at: <https://www.epa.gov/asbestos>.

**Who can I contact to learn more about the asbestos regulations in Nebraska?**

- The following table contains contact information for the various regulatory agencies in Nebraska, based on the regulatory authorities and pertinent subject matters handled by each agency.

For Asbestos NESHAP information:		
<b>Nebraska Dept. of Environment &amp; Energy – Regional Offices</b> Lincoln – (402) 471-2186 Omaha – (402) 679-1429 North Platte – (308) 530-0874 Holdrege – (308) 991-1972 Scottsbluff – (308) 641-7273	<b>Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department (LLCHD)</b> Air Quality Program – (402) 441-8040  * Lancaster County residents only	<b>City of Omaha Public Works – Omaha Air Quality Control</b> Air Quality Hotline – (402) 444-6015  * Omaha residents only

AHERA & Nebraska Asbestos Control Program:	OSHA Regulations
<b>Nebraska Dept. Health &amp; Human Services</b> Office of Environmental Health Hazards & Indoor Air Main Number – (402) 471-0386 Toll Free – (888) 242-1100	<b>Occupational Safety and Health Administration</b> Omaha Office – (402) 553-0171 Toll Free – (800) 642-8963

**Produced by:**

Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department  
 ATTN: Air Quality Program  
 3131 O Street  
 Lincoln, NE 68510

**To view this, and other information related to our agency, visit our web site at:**

<https://www.lincoln.ne.gov/City/Departments/Health-Department/Environmental/Air>

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