

Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Asbestos Abatement

Q. Is it safe to be doing asbestos abatement in an occupied building?

A. Yes. Asbestos abatement contractors must follow strict regulations when performing asbestos abatement to ensure that asbestos does not move into uninvolved areas. The abatement area is partitioned from the occupied areas using plastic sheeting and plywood. Only the abatement contractors are allowed to enter the abatement area once removal begins.

During the removal process, the contractors take several precautions to minimize dust formation, including wetting the materials. A "negative air" machine draws air from the abatement area through a series of High Efficiency Particulate Air filters to remove asbestos fibers and dusts that may contain asbestos. This ensures that the abatement area is "negative" with respect to the uninvolved area, such that air does not flow out of the abatement area except through filters.

A third-party firm conducts testing outside of the abatement area to confirm that there is no leak into the uninvolved areas.

Given these precautions, people outside of the abatement area are not at risk for exposure to asbestos.

Q. It looks like there is an air hose coming out of the abatement area. Is there asbestos coming out of it?

A. In most asbestos abatement containment areas, a "negative air" machine draws potentially contaminated air across a series of High Efficiency Particulate Air (HEPA) filters to remove any asbestos fibers and dusts that might contain asbestos. The exhaust from this machine may be placed outside of the abatement area. The air coming from it has been filtered through filters that are proven to trap asbestos fibers. Thus, it does not pose an asbestos exposure risk.

Q. During the abatement, can asbestos travel to other areas through the ventilation system?

A. During the preparation of the abatement area, any vents connected to the building's ventilation system are blocked. In many cases, the ventilation system is turned off during the abatement. Thus, protective measures are taken to prevent asbestos from traveling to areas outside of the containment area.

Q. How do we know that asbestos is not coming out of the abatement area?

A. Asbestos abatement regulations require the District to hire a third party firm, referred to as the Air Monitor. The air monitor's job is to conduct air testing for asbestos outside of the abatement area. Testing is conducted on-site. Test reports are available to the abatement firm, District Management, and the Project Manager.

Q. How do we know that the area is safe after an asbestos abatement?

Asbestos abatement regulations require the third-party Air Monitor to conduct clearance testing after the area has been cleaned up and before the area may be reoccupied. Testing is conducted on-site and test reports are available to the abatement firm, NRW CSD and the Project Manager.

Q. Are the people removing the asbestos District employees?

A. No. District faculty, staff and students are prohibited from intentionally disturbing asbestos-containing material and from removing such materials without a license.

Q. How do we know that the asbestos abatement contractors are doing their job correctly?

A. The Air Monitor is licensed to enter any and all enclosures to inspect the work done to insure the job was done completely and correctly. On occasion, State inspectors conduct unannounced inspections of many abatement projects that take place. The project manager follows up on all abatement jobs and will not rehire a firm that does not conduct their work in accordance with these high standards.

Q. What happens to the asbestos that is removed?

A. While still in the abatement area, the contractors place the asbestos debris in specially marked bags. Before bringing them out of the abatement area, the bags of debris are placed in secondary bags that are also marked "Asbestos-Containing Materials". The bags may be placed in locked dumpsters before being transported to a secure landfill that accepts asbestos waste.

Q. How do the asbestos abatement contractors avoid bringing asbestos out of the abatement area on their clothing?

A. Asbestos contractors wear Tyvek suits, hoods, shoe covers and respirators. Between the abatement area and the uninvolved area, there is a clean-up area where the contractors remove their protective clothing before entering the clean zone. Depending on the scope of the job, the clean-up area may also contain a shower, as well.

In all cases, the air monitoring outside the abatement area confirms that there is no contamination in the uninvolved area.