

Asbestos Abatement Projects

Frequently Asked Questions

- 1. Does an asbestos abatement project present a real-time hazard to me?** No. Asbestos abatement activities are conducted only as allowed by New York State Code Rule 56, which requires isolation of the abatement area from your work or travel area. You cannot inadvertently wander into a containment area. Signage is required to give you guidance; physical barriers will not permit your entry into the space without significant effort; the air within the containment site is pressurized to prevent accidental spread into the environment; and air sampling is taken to ensure proper procedures have been met.
- 2. Why is there asbestos on our campuses?** Asbestos was used in building materials for decades for fireproofing, sound absorption, and for preventing electrical and chemical damage. In 1973, the Environmental Protection Agency began regulating the use of asbestos as a part of the Clean Air Act. The University at Albany has been systematically abating asbestos from its campuses, as it renovates areas. The amount is decreasing each year; but there is, of course, asbestos remaining on our campuses given that the majority of the campuses were constructed prior to 1971.
- 3. Are there health hazards associated with asbestos?** Yes, there can be negative health impacts (primarily lung related diseases) associated with long-term exposure to asbestos. Inhalation and ingestion are the main routes of exposure. These impacts generally occur 10-50 years after exposure.
- 4. Is the air in my building safe to breathe during an abatement project?** Absolutely! The health and safety of students, faculty and staff is of the utmost importance to the University. As mentioned above, the air is monitored before, sometimes during (depends on the project size) and after a small or large project. The number of air samples taken is mandated by NYS Code Rule 56. The University at Albany would never knowingly allow individuals into a building, if the air was not safe to breath.
- 5. What is the University doing to protect me during an asbestos abatement project?** The NYS Department of Labor and Federal EPA tightly regulate asbestos abatement projects. Bulk material sampling and air sampling occur before a project begins and continue throughout the abatement project. Project air and bulk sampling and the subsequent analyses are performed by an independent third party. Both the contractor and consultant are certified to perform their respective work. In addition, the University has staff trained and certified in asbestos abatement, who provide an additional level of review on the project. Enclosures are built to completely seal all air from escaping the abatement area and only allow air to enter. The air is also filtered through HEPA (high efficiency particulate air) filters which capture 99.7% of all particles down to 0.3 microns in size. One micron is 1/25,400 of an inch. The University also maintains an asbestos handling license. Some minor projects, such as using glove bags to remove small amounts of pipe insulation, are performed by certified University personnel.

6. **Why does the air sometimes smell different during a project?** General construction dust and debris may have an odor; however, this is not harmful. Some people may be more sensitive to environmental conditions than others. Please feel free to call Customer Service at 518-442-3480, if there is an odor that you are concerned about.

7. **Who do I contact if I have questions or concerns during a project?** You should always feel free to contact Environmental Health & Safety Office with questions or concerns regarding asbestos or any related safety concerns. They can be reached at 518-442-3495. Customer Service can also be called at 518-442-3480, if there is a specific question about an abatement project.

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