



Kansas Asbestos Control: Asbestos Awareness

What are the dangers of exposure to asbestos? They include health implications, effect on air quality and fear of inhaling fibrous material that may not be detected for up to 20 years.

This factsheet will briefly discuss potential health and environmental risks associated with asbestos release and exposure, sources of asbestos-containing materials, or ACMs, and the importance of employing the services of certified asbestos abatement handlers.

In Kansas, the asbestos program is operated by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment, or KDHE, Bureau of Air. [Asbestos control statutes and regulations](#) are available online. If you have questions, call a KDHE asbestos specialist at 785-296-1549.

Potential health risks

Exposure to asbestos creates potential risks of lung-related diseases such as mesothelioma and respiratory ailments such as asthma. Asbestos fibers are released when ACMs are disturbed. When people breathe ACMs, some of the fibers can be trapped in their lungs and stay there for a long period of time. This can make breathing difficult, and symptoms may not show for up to 20 years after exposure. This means asbestos-related injuries may have occurred long before known symptoms are demonstrated by persons who might have been exposed.

Do not panic if you are in a building with asbestos. Just because a building has materials that contain asbestos does not mean your health is in danger. If ACMs are not disturbed and asbestos fibers are not released, risk for asbestos-related health issues are low.

Sources of asbestos-containing material

ACMs with more than one percent asbestos are referred to in the regulations as friable or non-friable. By definition, friable ACMs, when dry, will crumble or become powder by using only hand pressure. Non-friable ACMs will not crumble under hand pressure. However, non-friable ACMs can become friable if crushed, pulverized or mechanically disturbed by other means (e.g., by using a hammer or drill). Non-friable ACMs fit into two categories:

- Category I non-friable includes asbestos packings, gaskets, resilient floor covering and asphalt roofing products.
- Category II is any non-friable ACM not included in Category I.

When non-friable ACMs become friable due to aging, or are mechanically disturbed, the situation will fall under federal regulation. In this state, asbestos becomes dangerous when someone is around it and breathes it in without proper personal protective equipment.

Common places where asbestos can be found include old buildings such as schools, churches and residential houses. Asbestos can be around duct and pipe insulation, As a result of potential risks posed to human health and environment, the United States Environmental Protection Agency banned new uses of asbestos in 1989.



Kansas Asbestos Control: Asbestos Awareness

Friable examples of ACMs in older homes include the following:

- Popcorn ceilings
- Textured paints or sprayed-on surfacing materials
- Mastic adhesives for vinyl floors, carpets and ceiling tiles
- Paper underlayment for flooring (“felt”)
- Roofing felts
- Loose or batt insulation
- Insulation board on walls
- Pipe insulations
- Flexible connections for ventilation ducts
- Fuse-box linings and insulation on electrical wires
- Duct insulation damaged or in poor condition.

Non-friable examples of ACMs in homes include the following:

- Asphalt roofing shingles
- Cement roofing shingles and tiles
- Cement sidings
- Vinyl or asphalt floor tiles
- Vinyl wall coverings
- Rubber stair treads and risers
- Cement pipes
- Insulation around in-cabinet ovens and dishwashers
- Cement sheets around fireplaces, wood stoves and boilers.

Asbestos abatement

In Kansas, asbestos abatement activities are regulated by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment, Bureau of Air. Asbestos abatement activities include removal, encapsulation, dismantling or demolition of ACMs. KDHE must be notified if these activities occur in a building, structure or adjoining area accessible to the public. KDHE requires asbestos abatement businesses to be licensed and their workers certified. To obtain certifications or subsequent annual certificates, workers must successfully complete U.S. EPA-approved training or refresher courses. Contractors and their employees must be in compliance with all federally applicable asbestos standards, including those of the [Occupational Health and Safety Administration](#).

While it is legal for a homeowner to conduct asbestos abatement, **it is not recommended**. Minor repairs can trigger release of asbestos fibers; hence, it is highly recommended to use trained and certified asbestos handlers. To find a qualified contractor, use the KDHE list of [Kansas-licensed asbestos abatement contractors](#).

Resources:

- KDHE asbestos program telephone number — 785-296-1549
- KDHE asbestos website — <http://www.kdheks.gov/asbestos/indexasb.html>
- EPA asbestos website — <http://www.epa.gov/asbestos>