

Asbestos

Additional Resources:

- [OSHA QuickCard™ \(Spanish\)](#)
- [Complete OSHA Standard](#)

Asbestos has been linked to asbestosis (scarring of the lungs), mesothelioma (cancer of the pleural lining of lungs, chest, or abdomen), and lung cancer. Airborne exposure is the primary route of exposure.

Unless refuted by a properly conducted inspection, building owners and employers of potentially exposed employees must assume that surfacing materials (e.g., fireproofing) and thermal-system insulation installed no later than 1980 are presumed asbestos-containing materials (PACMs). Asphalt and vinyl flooring material installed no later than 1980 must also be considered asbestos-containing. Asbestos containing materials (ACMs) are by definition those that contain more than 1% asbestos.

Each employer who has a workplace or work operation where exposure monitoring is required must perform monitoring to determine accurately the airborne concentrations of asbestos to which employees may be exposed. 1926.1101(f)(1)(i)

Employers also must ensure that no employee is exposed to an airborne concentration of asbestos in excess of 0.1 f/cm³ (fibers/cubic centimeter) as an 8-hour time-weighted average (TWA). 1926.1101(c)(1)

In addition, employers must ensure that no employee is exposed to an airborne concentration of asbestos in excess of 1 f/cm³ s averaged over a sampling period of 30 minutes. 1926.1101(c)(2)

There are four classes of asbestos work per the OSHA standards:

- Class I- Removal of thermal system insulation and surfacing materials.
- Class II- Removal of all other ACMs.
- Class III - Repair and maintenance operations here ACM and PACM is likely to be disturbed.
- Class IV - Maintenance and custodial activities during which employees may contact but do not disturb ACM or PACM, and activities associated with cleaning debris from the other classes of work.

If working adjacent to a regulated area, employers shall take steps on a daily basis to assure that asbestos fibers do not migrate to the adjacent areas. 1926.1101(d)(4)

Respirators must be used during (1) all Class I asbestos jobs; (2) all Class II work where an asbestos-containing material is not removed substantially intact; (3) all Class II and III work not using wet methods, except on sloped roofs; (4) all Class II and III work without a negative exposure assessment; (5) all Class III jobs where thermal system insulation or surfacing asbestos containing or presumed asbestos-containing material is cut, abraded, or broken; (6) all Class IV work within a regulated area where respirators are required; (7) all work where employees are exposed above the PEL (Permissible Exposure Limit) or STEL (Short Term Exposure Limit); and (8) in emergencies. 1926.1101(h)(1)(i) through (viii)

The employer must provide and require the use of protective clothing - such as coveralls or similar whole-body clothing, head coverings, gloves, and foot coverings - for:

- Any employee exposed to airborne asbestos exceeding the PEL or STEL.
- Work without a negative exposure assessment, or
- Any employee performing Class I work involving the removal of over 25 linear or 10 square feet of thermal system insulation or surfacing asbestos-containing or presumed asbestos-containing materials. 1926.1101(i)(1)

The employer must provide a medical surveillance program for all employees who - for a combined total of 30 or more days per year - engage in Class I, II, or III work or are exposed at or above the PEL or STEL; or who wear a negative-pressure respirator. 1926.1101(m)(1)(i)(A) & (B)