Asbestos-containing material above a suspended ceiling is considered exposed if the space above the suspended ceiling is an air plenum. Suspended ceilings with numerous louvers, grids, or other open spaces should be considered exposed.

If friable asbestos-containing material can be reached by building users or maintenance people, either directly or by impact from objects used in the area, it is accessible and subject to accidental or intentional contact and damage. Material which is accessible is likely to be disturbed in the future.

Height above the floor is one measure of accessibility. However, objects have been observed embedded in ceilings 25 feet or more high. Nearness of the friable asbestos-containing material to heating, ventilation, lighting and plumbing systems requiring maintenance or repair may increase the material's accessibility.

In addition, the activities and behavior of persons using the building should be included in the assessment of whether the material is accessible. For example, persons involved in athletic activities may accidentally damage the material on the walls and ceilings of gymnasiums with balls or athletic equipment. To become fully aware of occupants' use of the building, the inspector should consult with building staff or personnel.

When assessing activity levels, consider not only the movement caused by the activities of people but also movement from other sources such as high vibration from mechanical equipment, highways, and airplanes. Another source of vibration is sound, such as music and noise, which sets airwaves in motion at certain frequencies. As these sound waves impact on asbestos-containing material, they may vibrate the material and contribute to fiber release. Therefore, more fibers may be released in a music practice room or auditorium than in the rest of the building.

The amount of activity of the occupants can best be described by identifying the purpose of the area as well as estimating the number of persons who enter the area on a typical day.

D.2.3 Factor 6: Change in Building Use

A planned change in the use of the building from, for example, a junior to a senior high school may imply significant changes in the potential for erosion or disturbance. Of particular note is the increased potential for damage from balls to previously inaccessible ceilings in gymnasiums. The addition of machinery (such as dust collectors in wood or metal shops) to a school or office building may introduce vibrations which, again, may be a future cause of concern. The inspector should exercise judgement and draw on experience in evaluating the likely effect of such changes.

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