CHAPTER 3 — DETECTING ASBESTOS, ASSESSING THE PROBLEM, AND SELECTING A COURSE OF ACTION

The central questions facing owners of buildings where the presence of asbestos is suspected are: (1) Is asbestos actually present? (2) If it is, how significant are existing or potential exposure problems? and (3) What control measures are needed? This chapter discusses technical aspects of the process for addressing these questions that was outlined in Chapter 2. The most significant conclusions and recommendations are summarized below.

Inspecting, Sampling, and Analyzing for Asbestos:

- Inspection and sampling procedures to detect friable asbestos-containing materials have been published in previous EPA documents. Key points are identifying homogeneous sampling areas and implementing the recommended quality assurance plan during sampling and analysis.
- Although emphasis is on detecting friable materials, the possible presence of nonfriable asbestos-containing materials must also be considered. However, nonfriable materials should not be sampled since sampling may unnecessarily release fibers.

Assessing the Need for Corrective Action:

- The condition of asbestos-containing materials and their potential for disturbance or erosion can be used to determine if corrective measures should be taken.
- Factors for assessing material condition and the potential for disturbance or erosion should be used qualitatively. Numerical scoring and index systems have not proven reliable.
- Due to technical problems and high costs, monitoring of airborne asbestos is not recommended for assessment purposes.

Control Techniques:

- Four alternative control actions should be considered: (1) asbestos removal, disposal, and replacement; (2) enclosure; (3) encapsulation; and (4) a special operations, maintenance, and reinspection program.
- The applicability and cost of each alternative will depend on the amount and condition of the asbestos-containing materials to be treated and structural characteristics of the underlying supporting surfaces.
- All control measures except the special operations and maintenance program should be undertaken only with proper work area containment and worker protection. Protection for maintenance workers also may be necessary.
- Until a control alternative is chosen, interim operations and maintenance procedures should be used to reduce levels of airborne fibers.
- A continuing program of special operations and periodic reassessment will be necessary even after asbestos-containing materials have been enclosed or encapsulated.

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