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Recommended Practices

For Fabricating, Handling and Applying Asbestos-Cement Products in the Building and Construction Industries

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Asbestos-cement products, in place and under normal use, present no known health risk to the user or general public

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Introduction

The discovery and production of hundreds of natural and synthetic materials including asbestos-cement products has in some instances prompted the need for special protective equipment and practices that should be employed by all in the industry where dust is created.

Manufacturers of asbestos-cement products have for years been taking protective measures to eliminate exposure of their workers to the inhalation of dust.

The fabricating, handling and applying of asbestos-cement products are diverse and range from the installation of a single piece to extensive operations involving cutting and machining by mechanical equipment. While care should always be exercised, special precautions are necessary when dusts in excess of federal, state or provincial allowable threshold limits are generated as the result of sawing, drilling or other operations. Respirators should be worn.

The following practices are recommended for fabricating, handling and applying asbestos-cement products in the building and construction industries. Contractors and applicators are urged to study these recommended practices carefully and to see that they are observed by all workers. It is in the best interest of both employer and employee to see that these recommended practices are strictly observed.

Housekeeping

1. An organized housekeeping program should be maintained in all areas and on all operations at all times.

2. A major source of dust is from loose materials, scrap and debris distributed throughout the job area which are disintegrated by being trampled upon, run over, etc. Much of such dust can be eliminated by exercising simple good housekeeping practices.

3. Specific standards and practices designed for providing safe, clean and orderly working conditions should be defined.

4. Efficient supervisory control, planning of systematic cleaning plus day-to-day follow-up are the basic requirements for environmental control and injury prevention.

Shipping, Handling and Storage

1. Under normal conditions, unit load handling and storage of asbestos-cement products present no environmental problems.

2. When handling individual pieces of flat and corrugated asbestos-cement sheets, care should be taken when placing one sheet on top of the other to avoid creating breakage and dust.

3. If breakage of asbestos-cement products occurs, broken pieces of material should be cleaned up and disposed of to avoid disintegration by then being trampled upon, run over, etc.

4. Handling and storage of bags containing asbestos fiber, cements, etc., present no problem providing that bags are unopened and not broken. Open or broken bags should be repacked, resealed or discarded to prevent dust distribution. Spillage should be cleaned up immediately.

Fabrication and Application

1. When moving asbestos-cement products to and from the fabrication site, individual pieces of materials should be handled with care to avoid breakage and dust.

2. Fabrication of asbestos-cement products involving cutting, drilling, sawing, etc., should be done in a manner that will minimize dust. The use of proper methods, tools and equipment is essential.

3. When cutting, drilling, sawing, etc., on a repeated basis with power equipment, mechanical dust collecting systems adequately designed to remove dust from the source should be used.

4. Fabrication of asbestos-cement products in confined spaces requires adequate mechanical dust collecting systems designed to collect dust at the source. Where these systems are impracticable, approved respirators should be worn.

5. Provide waste containers at all fabrication and application areas. Dispose of unusable material. Keep floors and surfaces clean. Vacuum-cleaning equipment is recommended to remove dust and small particles. If vacuum equipment is impracticable, wet down waste material before sweeping and shoveling. Respirators should be worn during clean-up operations.

Respiratory Equipment

Only U. S. Bureau of Mines approved respiratory equipment is recommended for use. The efficiency and effectiveness of this equipment is dependent upon proper care, cleaning and maintenance. A systematic procedure should be established to insure that this is done.

A list of approved respiratory equipment can be obtained from:

American Industrial Hygiene Association
14125 Prevost
Detroit, Michigan 48227

U. S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Mines
Nineteenth and E Streets, N.W.
Washington, D. C. 20240

Summary

Three major points to keep in mind in the fabricating, handling and applying of asbestos-cement products.

. . . Keep dust to a minimum.

. . . Wear U. S. Bureau of Mines approved respirators when exposed to dusts above federal, state or provincial allowable threshold limits.

. . . Maintain good housekeeping at all times.