

- Don't eat or store food, drinks or smoking materials in the vicinity of asbestos or asbestos-containing material.
- Wash hands, face and forearms before eating, drinking or smoking after working with asbestos products.
- Practice good on-the-job housekeeping.
- Don't smoke. The combination of cigarette smoking and asbestos exposure increases the risk of lung cancer.
- Participate in a medical surveillance program if required by your job.

Remember, although Bell System workplaces generally do not expose employees to hazardous levels of asbestos fibers, every precaution should be taken to avoid unexpected exposure. Your health is important—do everything you can to protect it.



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What is Asbestos?

Asbestos is the general term for a family of minerals which forms naturally as a soft rock made up of compressed fibers.

How is asbestos used?

Because of a unique combination of resistance to heat and chemical attack, high tensile strength and flexibility, asbestos has been widely used in industry and construction as insulation and fireproofing material.

Is asbestos a health hazard?

The mere presence of asbestos does not present a health hazard. Asbestos firmly bonded in a finished product is not a risk to health, as long as the product is not damaged or disturbed in a way which releases fibers into the air. Fibers are not easily released except during spraying, sawing, cutting, sanding, or other damage or deterioration. The removal or demolition of old asbestos-containing insulation also releases fibers.

The inhalation of airborne asbestos fibers, which can embed themselves in the airways or lung tissues, can increase the risk of developing certain diseases over a period of years. The breathing of one or two fibers, or a low-level short-term exposure, does not mean eventual asbestos-related disease. However, risk is greater with increased exposure levels and length of time exposed. Diseases which have been related to asbestos exposure are:

Asbestosis: a progressive, non-cancerous, non-reversible scarring of the lungs which can produce shortness of breath and disability.

Cancer of the lung

Other rare cancers of the chest or abdominal lining (mesothelioma) and digestive system.

What is being done?

Occupational standards for exposure to asbestos fibers have been established by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) of the Department of Labor. These standards are designed to protect workers from exposure to potentially hazardous amounts of airborne asbestos fibers and are being carefully observed by the Bell System.

In recent years, the Bell System has made substantial progress toward eliminating the purchase and use of buildings, materials, and products which contain asbestos. Environmental studies conducted by Bell Laboratories show that Bell System workplaces generally do not expose employees to hazardous concentrations of asbestos fibers.

However, these environmental studies identify several potential sources of exposure resulting from earlier use of asbestos (fireproofing and insulation for buildings, steam-pipes and boilers) or from existing uses for which no suitable substitute has been found (motor vehicle brake shoes and clutches.)

Personal and environmental monitoring in workplaces where asbestos fibers are released is being conducted to assure that government standards are being met. Procedures have been developed and issued to assure that asbestos levels are below the OSHA standard. In some cases, this might require engineering controls, such as enclosing, sealing or removal of the material, or the use of protective clothing and respirators where renovations significantly disrupt the material.

What can I do?

■ Be alert to potential exposure sources. Many materials that do not contain asbestos look identical to those that do. Examination and analysis of the material is required to determine the presence of asbestos.

■ Know the practices developed for your job to control asbestos exposure and follow them carefully.