

Regulation 278/05, Occupational Health and Safety Act

November 1, 2007

Answers to possible questions

1. What has triggered the new building materials regulation?

The Ministry of Labour takes worker safety very seriously, and periodically re-evaluates safety requirements. The concern with asbestos is when asbestos dust is inhaled. The Ministry has recently added new safety procedures for occasions when various building materials are being ground or sanded since that is when dust is created.

2. Why have I received the notice about building materials?

The notices have been required so that occupants of buildings (renters) do not conduct alterations or repairs, or otherwise disturb asbestos containing building materials since they may not know the required precautions.

3. Are the building materials which contain asbestos safe?

Asbestos comes in different forms, and is held in different conditions. Loose (i.e. friable) asbestos requires more precautions than non-friable asbestos because it can become airborne relatively easily. Asbestos in solid material like floor tiles or in walls (called non-friable asbestos) does not become airborne unless someone works on the materials (e.g. sanding, grinding or cutting the material). Until the asbestos fibres become airborne, they are perfectly safe. Health Canada says, "Asbestos fibre concentrations in the air in buildings are usually about the same as in the air outside."

4. Wouldn't it be better to remove the asbestos containing materials?

No, the scientific community agrees with government regulators that the concern about asbestos only arises when asbestos containing materials are disturbed. The recommended way to deal with the asbestos containing material is to leave it in place until the end of its normal useful life, and then remove it taking suitable precautions at that time.

5. Is there any risk to tenants?

No, the reason for the notice is to protect trades people and construction workers who may be exposed to dust from working with friable materials or from grinding, sanding or working with the non-friable material day in and day out. Apart from particles released during the process of grinding, sanding or cutting the non-friable materials (like floor tiles or walls), there is no danger from those building materials.

6. Where can I get more information?

Health Canada

http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/iyh-vsv/alt_formats/cmcd-dcmc/pdf/asbestos_e.pdf

Ministry of Labour

Occupational Health and Safety Branch

1-800-268-8013