Asbestos is known to cause disease and cancers, although symptoms may not appear for up to 20 or more years after exposure.

There is no known safe level of asbestos exposure. The Iowa Department of Natural Resources is responsible for implementing those portions of the Clean Air Act that protect the outside air from asbestos during facility renovation and demolition. However, indoor air and asbestos worker protection is regulated by OSHA, not DNR.

Until 1978, asbestos building materials were widely used in fireproofing, thermal and acoustical insulation, condensation control and decoration. Asbestos has been used in over 3,000 commercial products. Between 1900 and 1980, approximately 30 million tons of asbestos were used in building materials. Although the prevalent use of asbestos in commercial products occurred from the 1940’s to the 1970’s, asbestos-containing building materials was still sold as late as the early 1990’s.

Because of its widespread use, protecting the public from asbestos exposure is everyone’s responsibility.

To learn what regulations apply, often even before a facility is renovated or demolished, see inside.
Who is Subject to Asbestos Regulations?

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources protects the outside air from asbestos contamination under the Clean Air Act. The Act specifies National Emission Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants (NESHAPS) that includes asbestos. Indoor air and worker protection is regulated by OSHA, not DNR.

1. Who is Subject?

Facilities are subject. Facilities are any institutional, commercial, public or industrial installations or buildings, including single or active or inactive waste disposal sites. Also subject are residential buildings demolished or renovated as part of a commercial, public, industrial, or institutional project.

A few examples include demolishing residential houses for construction of roads, parking lots, apartments, commercial buildings or the demolishing of flood damaged homes as a FEMA project. However, residential buildings with four or fewer dwelling units demolished for purposes other than commercial, public, industrial or institutional are exempt. For example, a family demolishing their own house or the demolishing of flood damaged homes is exempt.

In addition, facilities previously subject to the asbestos NESHAP are not excluded, regardless of current use, ownership, or function.

2. When do the Regulations Apply?

Asbestos containing materials are dangerous only if disturbed. To protect human health, regulations often apply before demolition and renovation projects begin. Asbestos regulations are designed to prevent significant public exposure to airborne asbestos during renovation or demolition work. Because asbestos fibers can be microscopic, stay aloft almost indefinitely and travel great distances, asbestos regulations must be closely followed and enforced to protect the health of Iowans.

3. Inspect to See What Contains Asbestos

Before renovation or demolition, a thorough inspection is required. Small renovation projects well below the thresholds do not require inspection. (See item 4.) Inspections may be facility-wide or only for areas where renovation or demolition work occurs. All renovations and demolitions are subject to the regulation insofar as the owners and operators must determine if and how much asbestos is present at the site.

“Thorough inspection” means all suspect asbestos-containing materials require sampling and laboratory analysis, or are assumed to contain asbestos and handled in accordance with the regulation.

Inspection of asbestos-containing materials include floor tile, linoleum, pipe and boiler insulation, heat duct wrap and joint tape, cementsitious, transite or slate siding and roofing, asphalt-based roofing and asphalt shingles, ceiling tiles, joint compound, sprayed-on acoustic, decorative texturing and other materials.

The inspector must have a thorough knowledge of asbestos, know sampling techniques and be familiar with all asbestos regulations.

4. Post Inspection

After thorough inspection, observe the following:

Demolitions: All facility demolitions require submission of a complete, timely and accurate two-page demolition notification form to DNR — even if no asbestos is found.

Only certain notification procedures apply for combined regulated asbestos-containing material (RACM) below 160 square feet of surfacing, 200 linear feet of pipes, or 35 cubic feet of debris. As always, consult the actual regulation.

For demolitions ordered by state or local governments to prevent imminent collapse of unsound facilities, uncontaminated notification, emission control, and waste disposal procedures apply if the combined amount of RACM is at least 160 square feet, 260 linear feet, or 35 cubic feet.

Renovations: All notification, emission control, and waste disposal procedures apply if the combined amount of RACM equals or exceeds any of the following thresholds: 160 square feet of surfacing, 260 linear feet of pipes, or 35 cubic feet of debris. A renovation notification form must be submitted to DNR if RACM amounts meet or exceed these thresholds. No renovation procedures apply if the combined amount of RACM is below these amounts, or if tested material contains less than one per cent asbestos.

Depending upon the category and condition of the material, renovation procedures may not apply. As always, consult the actual regulation.

5. RACM Adds UP!!

Combined amounts of Regulated Asbestos Containing Material (RACM) are cumulative for a calendar year. If several projects are conducted at the same facility during a year, on the minimum RACM quantities are met, all notification, emission control, and waste disposal procedures apply. Reducing large asbestos removal projects into smaller segments to circumvent regulations is prohibited.

6. Take Ten!!

Upon postdate of submitted renovation or demolition notification forms, ten working days must pass before any disturbance of asbestos containing material takes place. This allows DNR inspectors time to ensure initial asbestos testing by contractors was thorough.

7. How is Asbestos Removed?

Before demolition or renovation occurs, asbestos containing materials must be removed. By regulation, an on site supervisor or foreman trained in NESHAP regulations and capable with the means to comply with them must be present.

Strict regulations are designed to prevent and contain microscopic asbestos fiber release during removal. The material must be adequately wet to prevent dust, contained in an enclosed, sealed area and disposed of following strict guidelines. Upon completion, the contractor must take air samples to determine if the inside air is clean before opening the contained area. Once open, building owners can check the area with a flash-light. If any dust or debris is present — even asbestos matter the size of sand grains or visible dust — a work practice violation can occur.

8. Safety Through Compliance — What about Fines?

If a DNR inspector finds workplace violations, penalties can follow. Regulations view both the facility owner and contractor accountable. Work practice violations are generally most serious as asbestos emissions can occur. Remember asbestos can kill and regulations are designed to protect all lowans from exposure. Failure to notify DNR of renovation and demolition projects is also a violation. The form must be filled out completely and accurately. Even failing to put the correct facility address can result in a violation. Correct information is used to ensure regulations are followed via on-site inspection. Violations can result in written notices, fines or other action including civil penalties.

Since 1992, DNR has conducted over 500 inspections. One third of these were follow-ups to public complaint, the rest were routine inspections.

For More Information

Asbestos NESHAP questions?
Call the DNR Air Quality Bureau at 515-725-9576 or Tom.Wuehr@dnr.iowa.gov

For notification forms or regulations
Call the DNR Air Quality offices at 515-725-9500 or see www.iowadnr.gov/Environmental-Protection/Air-Quality/Asbestos-Training-Fires

For asbestos contractor certification permits
Call the Iowa Division of Labor at 515-281-3606

For asbestos OSHA questions
Call Don Pedy, Iowa Division of Labor, at 515-281-5666

For AHERA (Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act) questions
Call the EPA at 815-551-7000 or contact Candace Bednar at Bednar.candace@epa.gov

Policies and statements in this brochure are intended solely as guidance, cannot be used to bind the agency, and is not a substitute for reading applicable codes and regulations.

NESHAP sections for demolition and renovation operations are found in the Code of Federal Regulations (40CFR61.145) (inspection, notification, emission control) and 40CFR61.150 (waste disposal).