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| Asbestos Awareness | | Revision Date: | 4/2/2019 |
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General Information

Asbestos is a naturally occurring mineral fiber that has been used commonly in a variety of building construction materials for insulation and as a fire-retardant. Due to the materials fiber strength and heat resistant properties, asbestos has been used for a wide range of manufactured goods, mostly in building materials, friction products, heat-resistant fabrics, packaging, gaskets, and coatings. When asbestos-containing materials are damaged or disturbed, microscopic fibers become airborne and can cause significant health problems if inhaled into the lungs.

What is the Hazard?

- Asbestos fibers are very small. If you inhale them, they go deep into your lungs, and stay there, possibly causing disease 10 to 40 years later.
- Asbestosis (a lung disease) and mesothelioma (a rare type of cancer) are both diseases that only people exposed to asbestos get.
- You're 90 times more likely to develop lung cancer if you smoke and are exposed to asbestos than people who do not smoke and are not exposed to asbestos.

Identifying Asbestos

- Non-Friable, any material that when dry, cannot be crumbled, pulverized, or reduced to powder and is not capable of being released into the air by hand pressure. Includes transite board, roof and floor materials, plaster and gypsum walls/ceilings.
- Friable, any material that when dry, can be crumbled, pulverized, or reduced to powder or capable of being released into the air by hand pressure. Includes pipe, fitting, and duct insulation, applied ceilings, fireproofing, and paper wrap (pipes & ducts).
- Friable asbestos containing material requires a warning label.
- Do not disturb asbestos containing materials. If you observe damaged or unlabeled asbestos containing material (or suspect asbestos containing materials), contact the Safety Department immediately.

Routes of Exposure and Health Effects

- The primary route of asbestos exposure is through the inhalation of fibers into the lungs which can lead to cancer, scarring, and chronic inflammation, especially when combined with smoking.
- The secondary route is through fluid ingestion; this can lead to cancers of the esophagus, stomach and intestine.

Asbestos Abatement

- Only licensed asbestos abatement contractors can remove asbestos containing materials.
- Asbestos abatement is performed using specialized work practices and controls to protect building occupants.

