

Proper disposal of asbestos vital

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Question: What exactly is asbestos?

Greg Pressley, Neo Corp.: Asbestos is a generic term for a group of naturally occurring mineral fibers, which were used in building materials. These items include, but are not limited to, floor tile and the associated mastic, linoleum, Sheetrock, joint compound, plaster, thermal system insulation and roofing mastics.

Q: Is a permit required to tear down a structure that may contain asbestos?

A: In addition to the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services -- Division of Public Health -- Health Hazards Control Unit, Buncombe, Forsythe, and Mecklenburg counties have their own air pollution control agencies. These agencies govern the national emission standard for hazardous air pollutants, which covers renovations and demolitions. In this standard, it defines the criteria set forth to acquire an asbestos removal/demolition permit.

Before demolishing a structure in North Carolina, you must first have an asbestos survey performed to determine if any asbestos is present. A material must contain greater than 1 percent asbestos to be considered. If asbestos is found, depending on the type, you may be able to leave it in place during the demolition.

Homeowners in Buncombe County should contact the Western North Carolina Regional Air Quality Agency at 250-6777 for further details in the standard pertaining to them.

Q: What safety precautions should be taken?

A: **You should first have the asbestos survey performed. If asbestos is found, do not disturb it. If you have to, depending on the type, different precautionary measures may need to be implemented. The one constant measure for all types is to keep it wet to minimize fiber release.**

Q: How and where can material containing asbestos be disposed of?

A: In Buncombe County, the landfill will accept both friable and nonfriable asbestos. It can be reached at 645-5311.

Q: Do modern structures contain asbestos?

A: Buildings/homes built before 1980 have a greater chance of having asbestos-containing materials. However, for those built after 1980, asbestos-containing materials are still being imported into the United States, but the sites are less likely to contain asbestos.

Q: How can you determine if your garage or storage shed contains asbestos?

A: You should have an accredited asbestos inspector collect samples of suspect materials.

Q: What are some Web sites people can visit to obtain information?

A: Western North Carolina Regional Air Quality Agency at www.wncairquality.org.

N.C. Dept. of Health and Human Services --Division of Public Health -- Health Hazards Control Unit at www.schs.state.nc.us/epi/.

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