

# Asbestos: cleaning your tools and PPE

## Explain dangers

Asbestos is a fibre that was used in many building materials up until the 1980s. Some products that are installed today still contain asbestos.

Breathing in asbestos fibres can cause:

- Asbestosis (scarring of the lungs that makes it difficult to breathe)
- Lung cancer
- Mesothelioma (cancer in the lining of the chest and/or abdomen)

There are three types of asbestos operations under Ontario law: Type 1, Type 2, and Type 3. Various tools, materials, and personal protective equipment (PPE) are used for each of these operations. Any equipment used during the work process must be cleaned at the end of each workday. Exposure to asbestos is still possible during the cleanup process, as asbestos can still be present on the used tools and PPE.

## Identify controls

It is important to use **amended water** as your wetting agent when cleaning up after asbestos operations. Amended water is often purchased commercially, but it can also be made by mixing 1 cup of dishwashing detergent for every 20 litres of water. “Regular” water alone is not sufficient to control asbestos dust and fibres. Amended water is used because it penetrates material more easily, allowing for better cleaning of “nooks and crannies.”

- Suitable containers must be used to dispose of all drop sheets, enclosure materials, asbestos waste, and any other non-reusable items such as towels. These containers must be:
  - Dust-tight
  - Suitable for the type of waste (e.g., puncture-proof)
  - Impervious to asbestos
  - Labeled to carry asbestos waste
- Never use compressed air to clean the work area.

- Use amended water to wet all drop sheets, polyethylene sheets, and enclosure materials used in the operation—before placing them in a suitable container for disposal. Never reuse drop sheets.
- Place asbestos waste in suitable containers.
- Do not place waste materials with sharp edges into a bag. Instead, neatly stack these items, wrap them together with two layers of polyethylene, and then place into a suitable asbestos waste container.
- Use damp-wiping or HEPA vacuuming methods to clean:
  - The outside of all asbestos waste disposal containers (once filled and sealed)
  - Rigid portable barriers that will be reused
  - All protective clothing
  - Your respirator, before removing it. Do not use strong detergents, hot water, or household cleaners or solvents, as they can damage the rubber parts of the respirator.
- To clean floors, use HEPA vacuuming, damp mopping, or wet sweeping—which involves spraying asbestos debris with amended water to keep it damp while you sweep.
- Place disposable clothing, enclosures and barrier materials into suitable containers.
- Treat used towels as asbestos waste, and dispose of them in a suitable container.
- After all asbestos waste has been removed, wash the work area with amended water.
- After all asbestos has been removed, tools used during the work process—including scaffolding, ladders, power tools, hammers, etc.—must also be cleaned by damp wiping or HEPA vacuuming.

## Demonstrate

With your crew, identify suitable asbestos-disposal containers on site.

Demonstrate how to use HEPA vacuuming and damp-wiping techniques to clean the outside of an asbestos-disposal container.