

Asbestos—Type 2 operations (medium risk)

Before giving this safety talk, ensure the type of asbestos operation has been confirmed.

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

Quick facts about mesothelioma

1. Most people who get mesothelioma have been exposed to asbestos.
2. Mesothelioma is an extremely painful disease.
3. There is no cure for mesothelioma.
4. People usually live for only two years once diagnosed.

There are three types of asbestos operations under Ontario law: Type 1, Type 2, and Type 3.

In Type 2 operations, the risk of asbestos exposure to workers is medium. Since exposure is likely to occur, precautions must be taken.

Asbestos-containing materials (ACM) can be “friable” or “non-friable.”

Friable ACM is easily crumbled or pulverized with the fingers.

Non-friable ACM is held together by some type of binding agent.

Identify controls

- Before the work begins, wet the ACM using a wetting agent if safe to do so.
- Wear disposable coveralls. Keep the wrists, ankles, and neck snug to prevent entry of dust. If your coveralls tear, replace them immediately.

- Use a NIOSH-approved respirator when working in the area.
- Use rubber boots to keep dust out.
- Use a HEPA vacuum or damp mop to clean up asbestos dust and waste on a regular basis so it does not build up.
- Do not allow workers without adequate personal protective equipment (PPE) into the work area. Ensure warning signs are in place.
- Set up an enclosure if you intend to remove a false ceiling and ACM is likely to be lying on the surface.
- Remember that, if you disturb less than 1 m² of friable asbestos, it must be done inside an enclosure. If more than 1 m², this may be considered a Type 3 asbestos operation.
- Place asbestos waste, disposable clothing, enclosures, barrier materials, and other contaminated items into a labeled dust-tight container. Damp wipe or HEPA vacuum the waste containers before removing them from the work area.
- Damp wipe or HEPA vacuum all PPE, such as respirators or protective coveralls, before leaving the work area.
- Never reuse drop sheets.
- Never use compressed air to clean the work area.
- Do not eat, drink, chew gum, or smoke in areas where asbestos could be present.
- Always wash your face and hands before leaving the work area.

Demonstrate

Using the owner’s record or report of asbestos (if applicable), review the following with your crew:

- The location of ACM on site
- The areas to keep away from
- The specific procedures to follow, including signage to warn others of the work

Review the specific type of respirator required for this job.