

TOOLBOX TALK #8

KEEP EMPLOYEES SAFE FROM ASBESTOS

Known for its strength and chemical and heat resistance, asbestos is a natural fibrous mineral that can have devastating effects on workers if proper precautions are not taken, states the experts at the Workers' Compensation Board. Exposure to asbestos can cause a variety of diseases, including asbestosis, a chronic lung disease resulting from prolonged exposure to asbestos dust; lung cancer and other cancers; and mesothelioma (an aggressive form of cancer that affects the lining of the lungs or abdominal cavity).

Although the use of asbestos is heavily regulated, it can still be found on worksites – particularly construction sites. According to OSHA, some materials, such as roofing and siding shingles, cement, caulk and plaster, industrial pipe wrapping, and heat-resistant textiles, are presumed to contain asbestos if installed before 1981.

To help protect employees, it is recommended that supervisors implement an effective asbestos management program that includes:

- A list of all asbestos-containing material in your workplace.
- Clear identification of materials that contain asbestos
- A qualified person administering a risk assessment of the potential for exposure to any of the asbestos-containing materials in your workplace, and creating safe working procedures if needed
- An in-place control plan, and knowledge of how to implement it if a worker is exposed to asbestos material
- Concise and complete records of your company's asbestos management program

