

Low-risk work activities

Low-risk work activities are those that involve working with or in proximity to asbestos-containing material if the material is not being:

- Cut, sanded, drilled, broken, ground down, or otherwise fragmented
- Disturbed, such that asbestos fibres may be released

In other words, it would not be necessary to use PPE or engineering controls to prevent worker exposure to airborne asbestos fibres.

Activities that carry a low risk of exposure to airborne asbestos fibres include:

- Disturbing materials that contain less than 0.5% asbestos, provided that dust controls are in place
- Repairs to drywall that has asbestos-containing drywall filler, as long as the filler is not disturbed, such as adding new filler to the top of painted drywall (for example, to repair small holes and dents) and sanding the filler, provided there is no contact with the asbestos-containing mud beneath the paint
- Installing a screw, nail, or hanger (for example, to hang a sign or picture) on drywall that contains painted asbestos-containing filler
- Replacing a single asbestos-containing floor tile without breaking the tile
- Moving asbestos-containing waste material that is contained within a cleaned, properly sealed bag and then double-bagged (as described on page 59)

Workers involved in such activities should have some knowledge of the hazards of asbestos and the location of the materials.

Employers must clearly identify all locations of asbestos-containing materials and ensure that all workers have been instructed in any work procedure restrictions needed to prevent disturbing asbestos-containing materials.

A WorkSafeBC officer may request to see asbestos air-monitoring results to confirm that these activities do not expose workers to asbestos fibres.

Note

All decisions about what constitutes a low-risk, moderate-risk, or high-risk work activity must be made by a qualified person through a proper risk assessment. For a definition of qualified person, see page 16.

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- Removing an entire piece of equipment or pipe with the asbestos-containing material remaining effectively intact (“wrap and cut” procedure)
 - Demolishing a block wall (for example, of cement) that has residual asbestos debris in its cavity (dust controls must be in place)
 - Removing asbestos-containing asphalt roofing material
 - Dismantling a treated containment upon completion of an asbestos removal project
 - Setting up and removing a glove bag apparatus for the removal of pipe insulation
 - Using a prefabricated glove bag to remove asbestos insulation from piping systems

Note

While the area outside a glove bag is considered a moderate-risk area, the work activity inside a glove bag is considered high risk. If a glove bag is torn or punctured, the risk level outside the bag may increase (for example, from moderate risk to high risk) if a significant amount of debris is released or spilled.

Cleanup activities that carry a moderate risk of exposure to airborne asbestos fibres include:

- Using a HEPA vacuum to clean ceiling tiles or light fixtures with light to moderate contamination
- Using a HEPA vacuum to clean asbestos-containing debris from an area before setting up containment

General moderate-risk procedures

Anyone involved in any moderate-risk work activity must follow written work procedures similar to those described here.

To ensure that anyone in or near the work area is not exposed to airborne asbestos fibres, the following must be done:

1. Clearly mark the designated work area boundary by placing barricades, fences, or similar structures around the work area.
2. Place signs around the work area warning people not to enter the work area unless authorized to do so.

Emergency spill cleanup

Cleaning up an asbestos spill may require a high level of control. Because of the urgent nature of spill cleanup, however, the spill area should be isolated and cleaned immediately.

High-risk work activities

Note

All decisions about what constitutes a low-risk, moderate-risk, or high-risk work activity must be made by a qualified person through a proper risk assessment. For a definition of qualified person, see page 16.

Note

The high-risk procedures described here provide an outline only and are not specific to any one workplace. Each individual owner, employer, or contractor must adapt the procedures to provide specific work instructions for each individual job.

High-risk work activities involve working with or in proximity to asbestos-containing material if a high level of control (such as an air-tight containment structure and powered air-purifying respirators or air-supplied respirators) is necessary to prevent worker exposure to airborne asbestos fibres.

High-risk work activities require specific procedures and containment to ensure the safety of workers and others who may be affected by the activities. OHS guideline G6.8 provides information to assist with the development of high-risk work procedures that meet the requirements of the Regulation.

Activities that carry a high risk of exposure to airborne asbestos fibres include:

- Removing, encapsulating, or enclosing materials containing friable asbestos during the repair, alteration, maintenance, demolition, or dismantling of any part of a building, structure, machine, or piece of equipment
- Cleaning, maintaining, or removing air-handling equipment in buildings where sprayed fireproofing materials containing asbestos have been applied to the airways or ventilation ducts or have been used as spray-on insulation
- Removing asbestos-containing textured materials from ceilings or walls
- Repairing, altering, or dismantling any part of a boiler, furnace, kiln, or similar device in which insulating materials containing asbestos have been used or applied
- Using power tools (without water or dust controls) to cut or drill through asbestos-containing materials
- Removing asbestos-containing vermiculite insulation
- Removing any asbestos-containing materials in circumstances where there would be a significant release of fibres

Anyone involved in any high-risk work activity must follow written work procedures similar to those described below.