



April 4, 2012

COMPLIANCE ADVISORY

Asbestos Removal Practices at Condominiums and Apartments

With this advisory, the San Diego Air Pollution Control District (District) is highlighting the requirements for conducting renovations or demolitions at regulated residential facilities. A regulated residential facility is any building, condominium, or apartment that contains more than four dwelling units. A regulated residential facility is also a group of buildings located on the same property and managed by a common entity, even when there are fewer than four dwelling units in each building. While this advisory highlights residential facilities, these requirements also apply to other commercial, institutional, and industrial facilities.

Recently, the District has discovered a number of violations at apartments and condominiums where workers scraped acoustic ceiling material without following the required proper work practices. For example, we have observed untrained and unprotected workers remove regulated asbestos-containing material and dispose of it improperly, resulting in dangerous exposure for themselves and others in the area. Our testing after ceilings were scraped revealed the presence of asbestos, which were violations of law and necessitated expensive asbestos remediation efforts. Such illegal activities will result in the District taking enforcement action against both those who disturb material illegally, and the owners of the properties where the violations occur.

If asbestos-containing materials are disturbed during renovation or demolition, the asbestos fibers can become airborne if not removed or handled properly. The fibers are dangerous when inhaled because they can cause cancer and other respiratory diseases such as asbestosis and mesothelioma. Because there is no known safe exposure level, the District vigorously enforces asbestos regulations as they apply to demolition operations, renovation operations, and the disposal of such waste. Penalties for violations may amount to hundreds of thousands of dollars and could result in criminal prosecution of violators. The District also reports asbestos violations to the County's Department of Environmental Health, the USEPA, and CAL-OSHA, all of whom can take separate legal action.

In order to help prevent violations and human asbestos exposure, an asbestos survey must be conducted to determine the presence of regulated asbestos-containing materials (RACM) prior to disturbing facility components. Building materials that may contain RACM include, but are not limited to: acoustic ceiling materials (often called "popcorn ceiling"); ceiling tiles; insulation and adhesives used on furnaces and air ducts; pipes and pipe wrapping; flooring and roofing materials; and insulation in walls and attics. A proper asbestos survey is required, as it provides owners and operators with the knowledge of where asbestos is present and allows for the proper handling of asbestos-containing materials.

In summary, the removal of RACM must comply with District Rule 361.145, which can be found at <http://www.sdapcd.org/rules/Appendix/AppenB/SubpM.pdf>.

It is strongly recommended you share this advisory and any survey(s) with your employees, tenants, maintenance workers, management staff and associations. If you would like more information regarding asbestos, please go to the website <http://www.sdasbestos.org>. If you have any questions regarding District requirements, please contact the District's Compliance Division at (858) 586-2650.

EL:jlh