

Fire Damaged Buildings and Debris May Contain Harmful Asbestos Fibers

Caution is necessary to avoid asbestos exposure when retrieving personal items and during the clean-up of fire debris or demolishing buildings and structures after wildfires.

Asbestos is a naturally occurring mineral that has been added to various types of building construction materials to increase fire resistance, strength, and durability. Exposure to asbestos can result in health ailments such as mesothelioma (cancer of the linings of the lungs and abdomen) and asbestosis (scarring of lung tissues that results in constricted breathing). The addition of asbestos to building materials has never been completely banned and caution is necessary when handling or disturbing damaged building materials and fire debris.

Asbestos containing materials (ACM) may be part of your building, even if it was recently constructed. When building materials are burned or damaged, any asbestos fibers present in the ash and debris can become airborne and easily inhaled.

Please follow these guidelines, as doing so will help to help minimize the release of harmful asbestos into the environment and the air we breathe.

- ✓ Where ACM is known to be present the debris/ash should be stabilized by wetting and covering with plastic sheeting until it is removed. This will help to reduce the release of asbestos fibers into the air.
- ✓ Avoid mixing of ACM with other debris/ash, as this contaminates everything with asbestos. Thoroughly wet ash and debris during cleanup and demolition activities.

For wetting, use a dispenser like a garden sprayer or a water hose with a nozzle that creates a fine, low-pressure spray or mist to avoid “kicking up” dust. It is suggest to use water mixed with a wetting agent, such as liquid dish detergent or other surfactant (1 tablespoon per 2-3 gallons of water), as that will make it easier to keep the debris wet without excessive water runoff

- ✓ ACM must be disposed of at a landfill approved to receive asbestos.

Additionally, the demolition of unburned load bearing structures at some facilities may be subject to the asbestos notification, removal and disposal requirements of San Diego Air Pollution Control District (APCD) Rule 1206. Prior to conducting any demolition of unburned structures please contact the APCD at (858) 586-2650 or via e-mail (apcdcomp@sdcounty.ca.gov) for the applicable requirements as we are here to help you.

If you have any questions please contact the APCD Compliance Division at (858) 586-2650 or via e-mail (apcdcomp@sdcounty.ca.gov).