



## 6-minute safety talk for plumbing

### Instructor Guide

#### Asbestos

**Topic overview** (why the topic is important to the students)

Asbestos fibres, when inhaled or swallowed, can cause cancer and lung disease. When air contaminated with asbestos dust is breathed in, small sharp, barbed-like asbestos fibres can become lodged deep in the lung tissues and other internal organs where they remain for life. Over time they can cause fatal disease. Breathing even small, invisible quantities of asbestos is known to cause cancer 20 to 30 years after exposure.

Asbestos is a mineral-based fibre that was widely used for decades because of its resistance to heat and corrosive chemicals. It is still found in buildings where it has been used as fire-proofing on ceilings, beams and walls, as insulation on boilers and pipes, as a sprayed application inside ventilations systems and cavities, and as a strengthener in the cement used in pipes.

Anyone working in a building or area where asbestos was used and is now deteriorating is in danger of contracting asbestos-related disease. **Workers who smoke and are exposed to asbestos are ten times more likely to get lung cancer than non-smokers.**

#### Demonstration and Discussion Topics

- Discuss** the hazards of working around asbestos.
- Distribute** the student handout.
- Review** the illustration on page 2 of the student handout.
- Discuss** the safety tips.
- Discuss** the attitude that "it won't happen to me". Remind them that even a minimal exposure to asbestos can have lifelong consequences.
- Make it real.** Tell at least two stories of injuries from your experience, or use the following examples:
  - A carpenter recently died of mesothelioma. He had been exposed to asbestos cement dust while cutting and replacing asbestos pipes (water mains) 30 years ago.
  - A pipe layer died as a result of being exposed to asbestos for years while cutting, drilling, fitting, and laying concrete asbestos pipe.
- Emphasize the importance of** identifying and reporting any safety concerns about housekeeping hazards.
- Answer** any questions or concerns they might have.

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#### Resources

- Safe Work Practices for Handling Asbestos  
[http://www.worksafebc.com/publications/health\\_and\\_safety/by\\_topic/assets/pdf/asbestos.pdf](http://www.worksafebc.com/publications/health_and_safety/by_topic/assets/pdf/asbestos.pdf)
- Hazard Alert: Breakdown of Asbestos Management Program Exposes Workers to Asbestos Fibres  
[http://www2.worksafebc.com/i/posters/2007/WS%2007\\_02.htm](http://www2.worksafebc.com/i/posters/2007/WS%2007_02.htm)
- Hazard Alert: Asbestos Hazards in Demolition, Renovation and Salvage  
[http://www2.worksafebc.com/i/posters/2003/WS%2003\\_03.htm](http://www2.worksafebc.com/i/posters/2003/WS%2003_03.htm)
- Asbestos Hazards when Renovating Older Homes  
[http://www.worksafebc.com/publications/health\\_and\\_safety/by\\_topic/assets/pdf/asbestos\\_hazards\\_homeowners.pdf](http://www.worksafebc.com/publications/health_and_safety/by_topic/assets/pdf/asbestos_hazards_homeowners.pdf)
- Downloadable Slide Show: Does the house you're working on contain asbestos?  
<http://www2.worksafebc.com/publications/multimedia/slideshows.asp?reportID=34484>