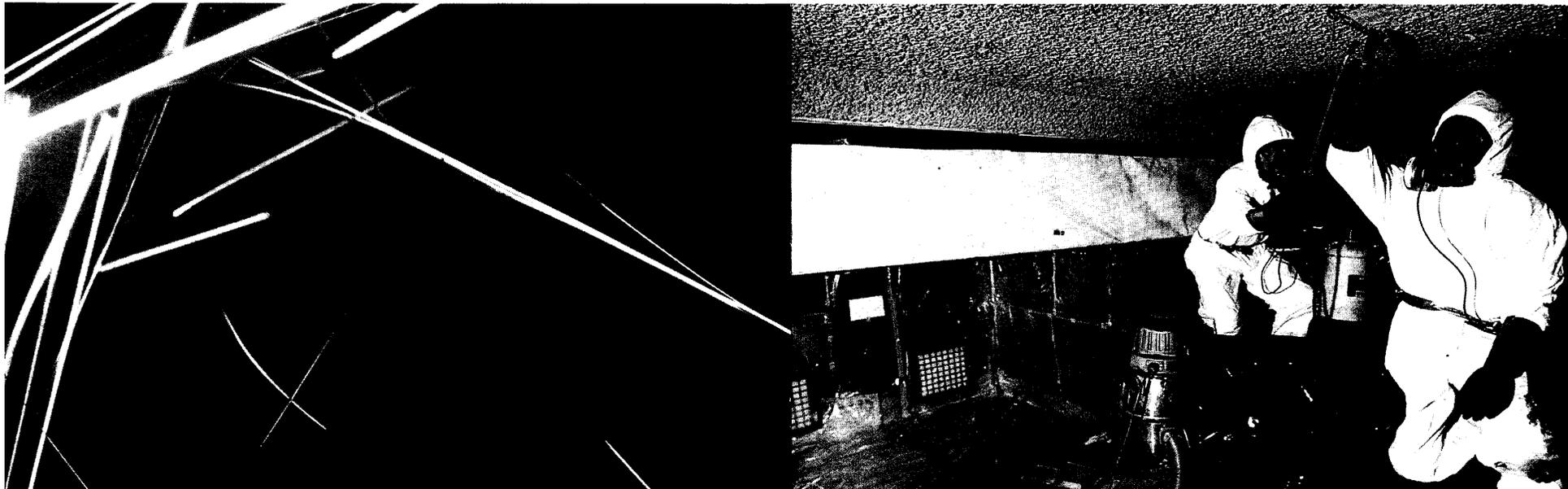


ENVIRONMENTAL ASBESTOS CONTROL

- Asbestos fibres under optical microscope at 100X magnification



- Workers removing asbestos plaster from a ceiling

Enquiries

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Environmental Protection
Department

This leaflet helps you to understand asbestos, and tells you how to comply with the Air Pollution Control Ordinance if asbestos containing materials are present in your premises.

What is asbestos?

Asbestos is the generic name given to a group of naturally occurring fibrous silicate minerals. The three most common types are chrysotile (white asbestos), amosite (brown asbestos) and crocidolite (blue asbestos).

Why is asbestos hazardous to health?

Asbestos can split into very fine fibres which can remain airborne for long periods of time after release. When inhaled, asbestos fibres can remain in the body for many years. The following diseases may be caused by exposure to asbestos fibres:

- * lung cancer
- * mesothelioma, a cancer of the lining of the chest or of the abdominal wall
- * asbestosis, scarring of the lung with fibrous tissue

The symptoms of asbestos related diseases may not appear until about 10 to 40 years after first exposure to asbestos.

Where can I find asbestos?

Most products made today do not contain asbestos. However, you can find suspected asbestos containing materials in buildings built before the mid 1980s. Some common examples are:

- * thermal insulation : lagging materials for steam and hot water pipe, heater, boiler, furnace, chimney, flue duct
- * electrical insulation : switch box, cable tray
- * sound absorption : acoustic plaster sprayed on ceiling and wall
- * fireproofing : filling material in wall and floor penetration, laboratory bench top, fire blanket, fire curtain
- * building materials : corrugated cement sheet for roofing, wall board, cement roof tile, asphalt roofing felt, vinyl floor covering, cement soil stack, cement pipe, refuse chute, ceiling tile
- * friction products : brake lining, clutch facing
- * building services : air duct flexible joint, cable trough and conduit, cistern
- * sealing and jointing : gasket, gland packing materials for pump and valve, putty, adhesive

You cannot tell with certainty whether a material contains asbestos by its appearance or colour. Therefore, it is safer to take a precautionary attitude and treat all suspect materials as asbestos containing unless proved otherwise by a registered asbestos consultant.

Shall I remove asbestos containing materials if they are present in my premises?

It is better not to remove asbestos containing materials in your premises if they are in good condition and left in place undisturbed.

However, if you need to carry out maintenance, renovation, demolition or any other work in your premises, and the work will disturb asbestos containing materials, you must, before you start the work, remove the affected asbestos containing materials in accordance with the requirements of the Air Pollution Control Ordinance.

How can I comply with the Air Pollution Control Ordinance if I need to remove asbestos containing materials in my premises?

If you need to remove asbestos containing materials in your premises, or if you need to carry out any work which involves the use or handling of asbestos containing materials, you must:

- (1) employ a registered asbestos consultant to conduct an asbestos investigation and prepare an asbestos investigation report and an asbestos abatement plan for you;
- (2) submit the asbestos investigation report and the asbestos abatement plan to the Environmental Protection Department at least 28 days before you start work on the asbestos containing materials;
- (3) notify the Environmental Protection Department of the date of commencement of work on asbestos containing materials at least 28 days in advance;
- (4) employ a registered asbestos contractor to carry out the asbestos work in accordance with the asbestos abatement plan;
- (5) employ a registered asbestos consultant to supervise the implementation of the asbestos abatement plan and the work of the registered asbestos contractor; and
- (6) employ a registered asbestos laboratory to conduct sampling and analysis for the asbestos work.

Where can I find the registered asbestos consultants, contractors, supervisors and laboratories?

You can inspect the registers of registered asbestos consultants, contractors, supervisors and laboratories at the Local Control Offices and the Air Management Group of the Environmental Protection Department free of charge during business hours.