

Asbestos

A Continuing Danger

Diseases caused by asbestos exposure continue to plague our society. Each year thousands of workers, as well as their families, are diagnosed with asbestos related diseases such as asbestosis, asbestos-related cancers, and mesothelioma. Here is what you need to know: **What is asbestos?**

Asbestos is a natural fiber found in rock formations in many places throughout the world. The asbestos fibers are extremely heat resistant and have been used as part of commercial insulation materials for over 100 years.

What types of products contain asbestos?

Prior to 1974 there were thousands of commercial products that contained asbestos. These products were commonly used in power plants, commercial boilers, navy ships, government buildings, hospitals, schools, churches, embassies, factories, and office buildings throughout the country, including in the DC metropolitan area. The products containing asbestos were used to insulate hot water pipes, boilers, generators, heating systems, drywall material, electrical boxes and cables, structural beams as well as many other aspects of buildings under construction.

Who has been exposed to asbestos products?

Prior to 1974, workers in practically every trade were routinely exposed to asbestos products. This includes electricians, insulators, plumbers, steamfitters, drywall workers, ironworkers, boilermakers, carpenters, laborers, etc. The dust created when asbestos products were used on a jobsite could affect every worker on the site. Tragically, sometimes family members of workers who came home with asbestos dust on their clothing could also be exposed to this harmful dust. Long term exposure to asbestos can lead to the development of asbestosis and cancers. Limited exposure to asbestos can, in some cases, lead to mesothelioma.

What are the health risks?

Exposure to asbestos has been known to cause many health problems. Generally, the three most common are asbestosis, lung cancer, and mesothelioma. Asbestosis is a lung disease in which there is scar tissue in the lungs which affects the ability to breathe. Lung cancer caused by asbestos may be one of several types of cancer, depending on the person's smoking history. Mesothelioma is a cancer of the lining of the lung or stomach. It is invariably fatal.

by Peter DePaolis
Partner



Why is asbestos still a risk today?

Even though asbestos has not been commonly used in new materials made after 1974, workers continue to be at risk when working around old materials, especially during renovation or demolition of old buildings when conditions are normally very dusty.

What are your legal rights if you are diagnosed with an asbestos disease?

Asbestos victims have a number of legal rights available to them. These include a workers' compensation claim, a Veterans Administration claim for those workers who were exposed while in the Navy, and claims against the manufacturers, distributors and suppliers of the asbestos products to which the worker was exposed. These claims can produce the medical treatment and financial support to help asbestos victims and their families. If you are ever diagnosed with an asbestos problem, we are happy to help you as we have helped many people over 30 years. Call us at 202-659-5500 or 703-218-4410.



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KOONZ.COM

2001 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW,
Suite 450
Washington, DC 20006
202-659-5500

10300 Eaton Place,
Suite 200
Fairfax, VA 22030
703-218-4410

6301 Ivy Lane,
Suite 700
Greenbelt, MD 20770
301-345-5700

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