



Where does the District have asbestos in our buildings?

Asbestos was frequently used in building materials at the time many school buildings across the country were built. In the District, we know that asbestos is present in 295 of our buildings.

How does the District monitor asbestos?

For school buildings, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)'s Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act (AHERA) requires that all schools be re-inspected every three years, and that, in addition, a surveillance inspection of known areas of asbestos occur every six months. Schools are the only buildings subject to AHERA, and reflect our prioritization of the health and safety of our schools.

How can I find the results of AHERA inspections?

3-Year inspection results are posted on the District's website at this webpage: philasd.org/capitalprograms/environmental/ahera

Please scroll for "AHERA Reports"

AHERA re-inspection reports undergo a review process before they are complete. The District is posting the most recent round of 3-year inspections as they become available.

Who inspects the buildings for AHERA inspections?

In Philadelphia, licensed Asbestos Investigators conduct the inspections.

In July of 2022, the District entered into a contract with Tetra Tech, Inc., a national environmental firm, to conduct all necessary 3-year reinspections and 6-month surveillance inspections for the District's 295 buildings covered by the AHERA program.

How does the District handle damaged asbestos?

In addition to the regular AHERA specifications, the City of Philadelphia has local regulations, known as the Asbestos Control Regulations ("ACR"). The ACR provides guidance on how damaged asbestos should be taken care of - through repair, encapsulation (enclosing asbestos in a protective substance), enclosure and removal.

The District uses all three methods to abate damaged asbestos, and looks at both the type of material and the extent of damage to determine which response action to utilize.

The EPA and AHERA say that asbestos is often best managed in place rather than removed as removal may disturb and inadvertently release fibers.

When does the District close spaces for Asbestos?

The identification of asbestos-containing materials, even if damaged, does not always necessitate an emergency response, and instead abatement of damage will be prioritized depending on the type of material and the extent of the damage.

However, when the District identifies a Fiber Release Episode, the space, whether or not student-occupied, is closed until the asbestos damage can be abated.

What is a Fiber Release Episode?

AHERA defines a Fiber Release Episode as: "any uncontrolled or unintentional disturbance of asbestos-containing material (ACM) resulting in a visible emission."

Are there any standards for how Asbestos is handled?

The EPA has set standards for school districts across the country, including in the AHERA regulations the District often refers to.

In addition, the City of Philadelphia has created a local set of regulations, known as the Asbestos Control Regulations (ACR) which governs the abatement of asbestos in all Philadelphia buildings.



What happens when a Fiber Release Episode is observed?

1. Identified an area of visible emission or asbestos damage;
2. Restricted an area around the damage to contain the potential dispersal of airborne fibers
3. Notified the City of Philadelphia of the need for abatement, including who will perform the abatement, and which licensed Asbestos Project Inspector (API) will provide oversight;
4. Either removed, encapsulated, enclosure or repaired the asbestos-containing material;
5. Cleaned the area where damage and/or debris was located;
6. Had the API take air samples, and have had the air samples come back showing that the samples met the local and federal requirements to reopen the space.

What steps does the District take to reopen spaces closed for an asbestos abatement?

To reopen a space, previously closed for asbestos, the District has:

1. Either removed, encapsulated or repaired the asbestos-containing material;
2. Cleaned the area where damage and/or debris was located;
3. Had the API take air samples, and have had the air samples come back showing that the samples met the local and federal requirements to reopen the space

Why am I hearing about plaster in District-owned buildings?

Work in Building 21 has prompted an urgent and comprehensive review of District sampling records in other buildings to determine if and where further plaster sampling is needed. So far we are finding asbestos in plaster in a limited number of buildings, but this analysis and the work is ongoing.

Who should I talk to if I am worried about whether I or my child was exposed to asbestos?

Questions about your individual health risk, which can vary from person to person, are best addressed with your physician or other health care provider.

If you do not have a health care provider, primary care doctor or are without health insurance, please find assistance at federally qualified health centers (FQHCs), which include the City of Philadelphia's health centers.

For more information, visit: phila.gov/documents/list-of-federally-qualified-health-centers

What risks does asbestos pose?

The EPA's Asbestos [Fact Sheet](#) provides the following information:

According to the EPA: "The risk from asbestos is when it is damaged and/or disturbed and asbestos fibers become airborne where they can be inhaled."

Additionally, "Undamaged asbestos that is properly managed in place poses little health risk to students, teachers and other school occupants."

Why doesn't the District just remove all the asbestos in our schools?

Removal is not always the safest way to manage asbestos. The EPA notes that a Local Education Agency "can safely and effectively manage in place asbestos-containing materials that are in good condition."

Even if removing all the asbestos were the ultimate goal - doing so would take a significant amount of time. District-wide our buildings have millions of square feet of asbestos-containing material."