

POST-STORM ASBESTOS GUIDANCE BUILDING DEBRIS CLEANUP



Storm-Generated Building Debris and Asbestos

The federal asbestos program focuses on protecting the public from exposure to airborne asbestos during the demolition and renovation of industrial, institutional, commercial, and residential buildings containing more than four units. According to EPA's guidance for catastrophic events, the management, transport, and disposal of building debris found on the ground is not subject to the Asbestos NESHAP including notification, management, transport, and disposal requirements. Building debris on the ground can be disposed of within the regular waste streams. It is important to remember that the waste stream could include asbestos containing materials. People involved with cleanup activities should take precautions to protect themselves.

Best Practices for Building Debris Cleanup

To minimize the risk of exposure to asbestos during cleanup activities associated with hurricanes, EPA guidance recommends that people involved in building debris management adhere to the following best management practices.

- Before disturbing piles of building debris, make sure that the piles have been “adequately wetted.” To “adequately wet” building debris means to sufficiently mix or penetrate the material with water to prevent the release of particulates. Wetting will reduce the possibility of releasing asbestos fibers along with other harmful particulates. If visible emissions are observed, then the material has not been adequately wetted.
- Personnel handling building debris should consider the use of personal protective equipment, including respirators. EPA recommends that personnel wear gloves, goggles, pants, shirts, socks, and most importantly, a tightly-fitted N-95 OSHA approved respiratory mask. A regular dust mask is not enough to protect against lead or asbestos. Carefully follow instructions when using a respiratory mask to make sure it fits correctly. A tight fit is important, and despite the heat, it is the best way to protect yourself from asbestos.
- Efforts should be made to minimize crushing or grinding building debris. Such volume reduction activities have the potential to release asbestos fibers that would have otherwise remained intact.
- Building debris should not be open burned under any circumstances, including in open piles or in air curtain incinerators. The burning of building debris could release asbestos fibers as well as generate a variety of pollutants depending on the materials burned.

Questions

If you have any question regarding this guidance please contact the Department's Northwest District Asbestos Coordinator at 850-595-8300 or the Division's Asbestos Coordinator at 850-717-9000.