

The General Industry Asbestos Standard

(29 CFR 1910.1001)

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration has regulated asbestos exposure in general industry since 1972. The OSHA standard has been revised many times. The latest revision of the standard was in 1994. The new rule cut the Permissible Exposure Level, PEL—the legally established maximum level at which a worker can be exposed, in half. It also mandates training for maintenance and custodial workers. This addition to the standard prevents workers from disturbing asbestos-containing material and causing it to become friable. In addition, the standard mandates that employers inform all workers in a building of the location of asbestos and the proper procedures for maintaining its integrity.

Building owners of public and commercial buildings and employers of potentially exposed workers must:

1. Keep records of the location and quantity of asbestos-containing materials and presumed asbestos-containing material present in the building.
2. In buildings built before 1980, treat thermal system insulation, sprayed-on and troweled-on surfacing materials as asbestos-containing material unless it is properly analyzed and found not to contain more than 1% asbestos.
3. Train those workers who come in contact with asbestos-containing materials on how not to disturb the asbestos.
4. Treat asphalt and vinyl floors installed before 1980 as asbestos-containing material unless properly analyzed and found to contain no more than 1% asbestos.
5. Inform supervisors of workers performing housekeeping duties of the presence and location of asbestos-containing material and presumed asbestos-containing material that may have contaminated the area.
6. Keep records of the presence, location, and quantity of asbestos-containing material and presumed asbestos-containing material present in the building for the duration of ownership. These records must be transferred to the next owner.

New Training Information Provisions

The revised standard mandates that employers must provide an annual awareness training course for workers, such as custodians, who do housekeeping operations where asbestos-containing material and presumed asbestos-containing material are present. The training must include:

1. The health effects of asbestos
2. The location of asbestos-containing material and presumed asbestos-containing material
3. Indicators of damage and deterioration of asbestos-containing material and presumed asbestos-containing material
4. The proper response to an asbestos fiber disturbance
5. Where the housekeeping requirements can be found in the standard
6. Specific techniques needed to properly clean and maintain floors, walls and other materials that contain asbestos or are presumed to contain asbestos