

Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Asbestos Removal on Brooklyn College Campus

Q. What asbestos-containing materials (ACM) are present at CUNY Brooklyn College?

A. Numerous surveys have been performed by environmental consulting firms, either as part of a baseline or as part of renovations. Buildings materials identified as ACM vary by location and abatement history but include: thermal insulation, such as pipe insulation/pipe fittings, roofing materials, window caulking, interior panels on fume hoods, lab bench tops, some skim coats on walls, floor tiles and associated floor tile mastic.

Q. How is ACM managed on campus?

A. It is the goal of Brooklyn College to maintain the ACM on campus in good condition and remove ACM when necessary. The decision to abate ACM is based upon an assessment of the materials level of damage and likeliness to be disturbed. Occupants are provided written notification before abatement begins via a posting at building entrances 7 calendar days before the start of the project.

Q. Is it safe to be doing asbestos abatement in an occupied building?

A. Yes. Asbestos abatement contractors must follow strict regulations when performing asbestos abatement to ensure that asbestos is not dispersed outside the work area. The abatement area is isolated from non-abatement areas using plastic sheeting and plywood. Only the abatement contractors are allowed to enter the abatement area once the project begins. During the removal process, the contractors take several precautions to minimize dispersal of asbestos fibers. This includes wetting the materials and using a "negative air" machine to draw air from the abatement area. The air goes through a series of filters, including a High Efficiency Particulate Air (HEPA) filter, to remove asbestos fibers and dusts that may contain asbestos. This ensures that the abatement area is "negative" to the surrounding area, such that air flows from the occupied area into the abatement area and not the reverse. The filtered air is exhausted to the exterior of the building. A third-party firm conducts testing outside of the abatement area to confirm that there are no elevated fiber levels outside the work area. Given these precautions, people outside of the abatement area are not at risk for exposure to asbestos from these abatement projects.

Q. What are the hoses or ducts coming out of the abatement area? Is asbestos coming out?

A. In most asbestos abatement containment areas, a "negative air" machine draws potentially contaminated air across a series of filters, with a High Efficiency Particulate Air (HEPA) filter which is known to remove asbestos fibers and dusts that might contain asbestos. The filtered air is exhausted to the exterior of the building. Another hose supplies water for decontamination. Waste water is collected and filtered to regulatory standards before discharge. Thus, they do not pose an asbestos exposure risk.

Q. During the abatement, can asbestos travel to other areas through the ventilation system?

A. During the preparation of the abatement area, any vents connected to the building's ventilation system are sealed. In most cases, the ventilation system is turned off to the work area during the abatement. Thus, protective measures are taken to prevent asbestos from traveling to areas outside of the containment area.

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Q. How do we know that asbestos is not coming out of the abatement area?

A. Asbestos abatement regulations require the College to hire a third party firm to conduct air testing for asbestos outside of the abatement area. Testing is conducted on-site. Test reports are available to the abatement firm and the College Environmental Health & Safety Director. A work area will not be released to the building until successful final air clearance in the work area has been achieved.

Q. How do we know that the asbestos abatement contractors are doing their job correctly?

A. Regulatory inspectors conduct unannounced inspections of abatement projects that take place on campus. Additionally, both CUNY and College Project Managers and Environmental Health & Safety Director follow up on all abatement jobs and advise not to rehire any firm that does not conduct their work in accordance with regulations. In addition, a third party environmental consultant monitors the job to ensure that the contractor is performing work per applicable regulations.

Q. What happens to the asbestos that is removed?

A. While still in the abatement area, the contractors place the wet asbestos debris in specially marked bags. Before bringing them out of the abatement area, the sealed bags of debris are washed and then placed in secondary bags that are also marked "Asbestos-Containing Materials". The sealed bags are placed in locked dumpsters before being transported to a secure landfill that accepts asbestos waste.

Q. How do the contractors avoid bringing asbestos out of the abatement area on their clothing?

A. Asbestos contractors wear disposable suits, hoods, gloves, shoe covers and respirators. Between the abatement area and the non-abatement area, there is a clean-up/decontamination area where the contractors remove their protective clothing before entering the clean zone. At no time does a worker exit the abatement area without properly decontaminating himself/herself. In all cases, the regulations require air monitoring outside the abatement area, which confirms that there is no contamination outside the abatement area.

Q. How is clearance sampling done?

A. Clearance sampling is performed after an abatement to determine if the abated space can be released for occupancy. After completing abatement work, the contained area is cleaned, visually inspected, and then sampled to determine if it can be released for occupancy. The third party monitoring firm sets up high-volume sampling pumps and fans. Pumps are run for a specified period of time and a air sample is collected and analyzed at an off-site laboratory. If the fiber concentrations for all samples are below the regulatory clearance level (0.01 fiber per cubic centimeter of air), the contractor removes the critical barriers and decon tents, and demobilizes the site.

Q. What should I do if I have concerns or questions about abatement on campus?

A. Bring your concerns to your supervisor who may have more information about renovations and

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projects in your work environment. If your concerns are not resolved, contact the Office of Environmental Health and Safety and ehs@brooklyn.cuny.edu or x5400.

Q. Where can I obtain basic information about asbestos in the environment and the risk of exposure?

Visit NYC's Health Topics: <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/health/health-topics/asbestos.page>