

November 9, 2012

GUIDANCE DOCUMENT REGARDING POTENTIAL ASBESTOS CONTAINING MATERIAL FOR OWNERS OF SMALL RESIDENTIAL AND SMALL COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS AFFECTED BY HURRICANE SANDY

Cleanup activities related to homes and businesses damaged by Hurricane Sandy can pose health and environmental hazards due to the possible presence of asbestos-containing materials in many buildings. This Guidance Document, which applies to single-story commercial buildings and residential buildings with less than four dwelling units, is intended to provide information as to how these activities should be performed.

Asbestos

Buildings damaged by Hurricane Sandy may contain asbestos-containing materials. Asbestos is a naturally occurring substance that was widely used in building materials. It is commonly found in materials such as:

- Roofing, shingles and siding
- Backing material on floor tiles and vinyl flooring
- Textured paints
- Pipe and boiler coverings (thermal system insulation)
- Fireproofing

Asbestos poses health risks only when fibers are in the air that people breathe. Buildings built after 1975 are much less likely to contain asbestos-containing materials than buildings built prior to 1975. Also, certain types of materials, including floor tiles and roof and siding shingles, are much less likely to release fibers than pipe and boiler insulation.

Handling Guidelines

The following guidelines are provided to help minimize health, safety and environmental risks associated with clean up and disposal of suspect asbestos containing material disturbed as a result of Hurricane Sandy.

For buildings that are suspected of containing asbestos and have been damaged, either through storm damage or flooding, building owners and general contractors are encouraged to seek the assistance of a New York State-licensed asbestos abatement contractor. At a minimum, building owners and contractors should use the following recommended procedures to handle any suspect materials:

- Wet down any suspect materials. Damp materials are less likely to release fibers into air.
- When handling suspect materials, wear gloves, goggles, and respiratory protection.

- After handling the material but before removing the mask, wash hands and clothing thoroughly.
- Avoid any activity that will cause the materials to generate dust such as vacuuming. Wet the area down completely and mop or wipe up the dust.
- Remove all family members from the area where work is taking place, or seal the area.

Disposal

Where possible, construction and demolition debris should be bagged or placed in a container for collection. Use heavy duty, industrial grade or contractor grade bags.

Other Potential Hazards

In addition to the possible presence of asbestos-containing material, other hazards may be encountered during cleanup activities, including contamination by sewage or spilled fuel. If you have questions related to environmental issues raised by cleanup activities, please call 311.

Contact Information

If you need additional assistance please call 718 595 3682 during regular office hours or 311 after office hours. You may also contact us by email at DL_AECN@dep.nyc.gov.