

Brownfields Newsletter

KNIK TRIBE
September 2025



Asbestos Awareness

Asbestos was once considered a “miracle material” in construction and manufacturing. Today, it’s recognized as a serious health hazard. While its use has been greatly restricted in the United States, asbestos-containing materials (ACMs) still exist in many older homes, schools, and workplaces. Understanding the risks—and knowing what to do if you suspect asbestos—is critical for protecting your health and your family’s safety.

This newsletter focuses on asbestos and asbestos-containing materials to provide you with information on where you might encounter it, health hazards associated with exposure, and what to do if suspect asbestos in your home or workplace.

In this newsletter:

What is asbestos?
Where asbestos may be found
Health Hazards
What to do if you suspect asbestos is present

Asbestos: What is it and where might it be found?

What is Asbestos?

Asbestos is a group of six naturally occurring silicate minerals: chrysotile, amosite, crocidolite, tremolite, anthophyllite, and actinolite. These minerals form in bundles of microscopic, needle-like fibers that are strong, flexible, heat-resistant, and chemically stable.

These properties made asbestos a popular material choice for construction and manufacturing applications throughout much of the 20th century.

Why it was used:

- **Heat & fire resistance** – ideal for insulation and fireproofing
- **Durability** – resists wear, chemicals, and electricity
- **Affordability** – low cost for manufacturers and builders
- **Lightweight strength** – easy to work with, yet long-lasting

For decades, asbestos was mixed into thousands of products, from cement and plaster to brake pads and gaskets.

Any material with more than **1% asbestos by weight** is considered asbestos containing.



Where might it be found?

Unfortunately, this material was used in many products before the health risks associated with it were discovered, so it can be found in many materials around residential and commercial buildings, particularly those built before 1980.

• Pipe & boiler insulation



• Ceiling tiles & spray-on textures



• Vinyl floor tiles & sheet flooring backing

• Roofing shingles & siding



• Cement pipes & panels

• Fireplace inserts & heat-resistant boards

Health Hazards

Asbestos becomes dangerous once it's degraded, damaged, or disturbed, releasing fibers into the air. When inhaled, these fibers can lodge in lung tissue and cause serious illnesses, often decades after exposure:

- **Asbestosis** – Scarring of the lungs, causing shortness of breath and coughing



- **Lung Cancer** – Increased risk, especially for smokers exposed to asbestos
- **Mesothelioma** – A rare but aggressive cancer of the lung or abdominal lining

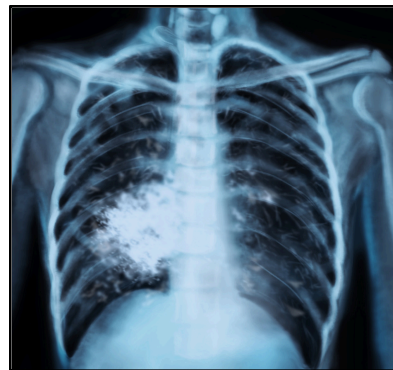
◆ Diagnosis & Treatment

If you've been exposed, a doctor may order:

- Chest X-ray or CT scan
- Lung function tests

While there's no cure for asbestosis or mesothelioma, early detection may improve outcomes. Treatments include surgery, chemotherapy, radiation, or symptom management.

The best “treatment” is prevention- avoiding further exposure.



“ASBESTOS IS SAFEST WHEN LEFT ALONE AND INTACT. THE DANGER BEGINS WHEN IT’S DISTURBED.”



What to do if you suspect asbestos is present

If you suspect there are Asbestos-Containing Materials present in an area in which you are actively working or plan to work in the future:

- **Stop work immediately** – Don't sand, drill, or cut.
- **Hire a certified inspector** – Only professionals should test materials.
- **Follow regulations** – Use licensed abatement contractors for removal.
- **Ask about encapsulation** – Sealing may be safer than removal in some cases.

Bottom Line:

Asbestos doesn't have to be a threat—knowledge and professional help are your best defenses.

Resources:

- EPA Asbestos: epa.gov/asbestos
- OSHA Safety: osha.gov/asbestos

You can also contact the Knik Tribe's Brownfields Program for additional advice. Contact information can be found at the bottom of this page.



Where to Report a Suspected Brownfield

If there is a site that you suspect may be a brownfield, please contact the Knik Tribe Brownfields Program. Once we have some basic information about the site from you, we can further investigate the site and determine a course of action.

You can report sites to the Brownfields Program by filling out a reporting form on our website (listed at bottom of page), emailing krobillard@kniktribe.org, or you can report in person at the Natural Resources Department located at 1800 Laurel Drive, Palmer, AK.

Important information to provide us regarding your site of concern:

- **Location**- be as specific as possible. Addresses, coordinates, or intersections are helpful
- **Concern**- what makes you think this is a brownfield? Did you observe contamination? Why do you suspect contamination might be present?
- **Contact Information**- If you provide your contact information, we can reach out and gather additional information if needed and keep you up to date as we investigate your reported site.



Knik Tribe Brownfields
Program

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