



New safe work procedures for Facilities Management staff

UVic is implementing new safe work procedures to ensure the safety of staff in buildings constructed prior to 1990, where asbestos may be present. You may see Facilities Management staff wearing personal protective equipment such as safety suits and half-face respirators to perform minor maintenance tasks.

What is asbestos?

Asbestos is a group of naturally occurring fibrous minerals, historically used in many construction materials because of its strength, and resistance to heat and chemicals. Undisturbed asbestos is not a health hazard.

Under WorkSafeBC legislation, a product is considered to contain asbestos when it contains 0.5% or more asbestos by weight, when tested in accordance with one of three cited methods. Vermiculite insulation is an exception, and is considered to contain asbestos when any asbestos is found. WorkSafeBC has defined a permissible exposure limit of 0.1 fibres per milliliter of air; however, any exposure must be kept as low as reasonably achievable.



How do I know if there is asbestos in my building or work area?

Facilities Management maintains an inventory of asbestos materials in each building. The Asbestos Program Coordinator maintains the files and an electronic database, following Worksafe BC regulations.

On campus, asbestos has been found in materials including:

- Drywall taping compound
- Floor tiles and linoleum
- Mechanical insulation
- Fire stopping, mastic and caulking materials
- Cement board products (behind radiators, fumehoods, etc.)

Why is UVic bringing in new procedures?

UVic is committed to the safety of staff and students, and is refining work procedures to ensure compliance with WorkSafeBC legislative requirements.

These procedures reduce or eliminate worker exposure to a level of risk as low as reasonably achievable. Worksafe BC is notified every time these maintenance tasks occur.

Will I be exposed to asbestos as a result of this work?

No. The new procedures reduce the possible risk to occupants and to the Facilities Management employees doing the work.

The work that staff are permitted to perform under these procedures is limited to minor tasks such as drilling wall inserts, where the risk of disturbing asbestos is extremely low.

Will I need to leave my work area?

We request that occupants leave the work space until the work is completed.

In corridors and public spaces, work will generally be carried out during non-business hours and a work boundary will be created.

After the work is completed will asbestos particles be in the air?

The procedures will control the potential release of asbestos fibres. For example, a surfactant (best described as soapy water) will be used to wet drywall mud, to prevent asbestos particles from becoming airborne. A specialized vacuum will also be used to clean the area (see below).



Will my work area be vacuumed/cleaned after the work is finished?

Yes. Before the work is carried out, furniture in the immediate vicinity of the work will be covered in plastic. The plastic sheets and personal protective equipment worn by employees will be vacuumed with a specialty vacuum containing a HEPA (high efficiency particulate air) filter. This filter is 99.97% efficient at collecting aerosol particles.

Do outside contractors have to follow the same regulations?

Yes. Depending on the scope of the project, contractors may also be required to set up airtight containment zones (e.g. for asbestos abatement projects).

Can I put up a poster or shelf myself?

You can hang light items such as posters using poster putty or another appropriate adhesive.

Avoid penetrating ceilings, walls or floors. Please call trained Facilities Management staff to hang shelves and other items that require the use of nails or screws.

Where can I get more information about asbestos and the workplace?

Contact the Asbestos Program Coordinator in Facilities Management at apcfmgmt@uvic.ca or local 7601, or visit the website at www.uvic.ca/facilities/about/health_safety. You can also contact the Department of Occupational Health, Safety and Environment or your building safety committee representative.



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