

(NESHAP)

National Emissions Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants

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The Clean Air Act (CAA) requires the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to develop and enforce regulations to protect the general public from exposure to airborne contaminants that are known to be hazardous to human health. In accordance with Section 112 of the CAA, EPA established National Emissions Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants (NESHAP) to protect the public. Asbestos was one of the first hazardous air pollutants regulated under Section 112. On March 31, 1971, EPA identified asbestos as a hazardous pollutant, and on April 6, 1973, EPA first promulgated the Asbestos NESHAP in 40 CFR Part 61.

In 1990, a revised NESHAP regulation was promulgated by EPA. Information contained on this page is consistent with the amended regulation. This page answers the most commonly asked questions about the Asbestos NESHAP for demolitions and renovations. Many of the questions included in this page have been raised by demolition and renovation contractors in recent years. Most questions relate to how a demolition or renovation contractor or building owner can best comply with the regulation. The responses assume that the questioner has a basic understanding of the Asbestos NESHAP and demolition and renovation practices.

The Asbestos NESHAP regulations protect the public by minimizing the release of asbestos fibers during activities involving the processing, handling, and disposal of asbestos-containing material. Accordingly, the Asbestos NESHAP specifies work practices to be followed during demolitions and renovations of all structures, installations, and buildings (excluding residential buildings that have four or fewer dwelling units). In addition, the regulations require the owner of the building and/or the contractor to notify applicable State and local agencies and/or EPA Regional Offices before all demolitions, or before renovations of buildings that contain a certain threshold amount of asbestos.

For more information about the Asbestos NESHAP or for answers to questions not covered in this page, contact the delegated State or local agency or the appropriate EPA Regional Office.

Questions and Answers

What is the purpose of the Asbestos NESHAP regulation?

The purpose is to protect the public health by minimizing the release of asbestos when facilities which contain asbestos-containing materials (ACMs) are demolished or renovated.

How much regulated asbestos-containing material (RACM) is disposed of annually from demolition/renovation operations?

Approximately 5.7 million cubic feet of RACM is disposed of annually. In accordance with the regulation, most RACM is taken to landfills, where it is covered by soil or other debris in order to keep it from releasing asbestos fibers.

What is the difference between demolishing a facility and renovating it? "Demolition" and "renovation" are defined in the regulation. You "demolish" a facility when you remove or wreck any load-supporting structural member of that facility or perform any related operations; you also "demolish" a facility when you burn it. You "renovate" a facility when you alter any part of that facility in any other manner. Renovation includes stripping or removing asbestos from the facility.

What percentage of asbestos related activities involve demolitions?
Demolitions comprise approximately 10% of all reported asbestos-related activities.

Is there a numeric emission limit for the release of asbestos fibers during renovations or demolitions in the asbestos NESHAP regulation?

No, the Asbestos NESHAP relating to demolitions or renovations is a work practice standard. This means that it does not place specific numerical emission limitations for asbestos fibers on asbestos demolitions and removals. Instead, it requires specific actions be taken to control emissions. However, the Asbestos NESHAP does specify zero visible emissions to the outside air from activity relating to the transport and disposal of asbestos waste.

Who is responsible for enforcing the Asbestos NESHAP standards?

Under Section 112 of the Clean Air Act, Congress gave EPA the responsibility for enforcing regulations relating to asbestos renovations and demolitions. The CAA allows EPA to delegate this authority to State and local agencies. Even after EPA delegates responsibility to a State or local agency, EPA retains the authority to oversee agency performance and to enforce NESHAP regulations as appropriate.