

ASBESTOS EXPOSURE		TROY FIRE DEPT. TACTICAL PLAN 208.06	
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During the course of fire fighting, fire fighters can be exposed to asbestos products used in buildings. Asbestos is a mineral that can be separated into long fibers. It can be found in spray-on fireproofing, pipe insulation wrap, and certain ceiling materials. The use of asbestos was stopped in 1975. However any commercial and/or industrial buildings built prior to that time should be suspect. The presence of asbestos should also be suspect in older residential homes.

Asbestos is a hazard to fire fighters when it becomes dislodged and drops, or becomes airborne. When disturbed, the large fibers contained in asbestos can break into microscopic particles. These “invisible” fibers can then be released by the billions into the air and inhaled. Because of their small size & shape, they can float for long periods of time, even when the air is still.

Larger particles may become trapped in the nose & mouth, or swallowed and reach the intestines. Smaller fibers enter the lungs. The smallest fibers work their way through the lung to reach its lining and cause scarring of the lung tissue. Respiratory problems & even cancer can result from absorption of these particles.

During fire suppression and especially during overhaul operations, dry materials that may be present above drop type ceilings or in walls and on pipes and ductwork can be disturbed, causing particles to become airborne. Always wear turnout gear with SCBA in areas known or suspected to contain asbestos. Rinse off any visible debris from gear and equipment prior to removal from the scene.

Standard Procedures for Asbestos Decontamination include:

- All exposed equipment is to be washed and scrubbed at the scene before returning to the station.
- Set up a decontamination area as close to the fire scene as possible.
- Provide a hose line to rinse off all equipment, turnout gear, hose, and SCBA.
 - When possible, lightly scrub with a brush while rinsing.
- Personnel performing decontamination are to wear full turnout gear and SCBA.