Asbestos is a mineral fiber that was historically used in a variety of building construction materials due to its structural strength and for its qualities as an insulator and fire-retardant. The use of asbestos was largely banned or discontinued in building materials by the late 1980s, however it still can be found in materials manufactured outside of the US. When asbestos-containing materials (ACM) are damaged or disturbed, microscopic fibers become airborne and can cause significant health problems if inhaled. The goal of this Safety Talk is to provide awareness training to Colby employees so that you can recognize ACM and how to prevent exposure.

**PRIMARY ASBESTOS FORMS**

Asbestos may be found in two forms on campus, Friable and Non-Friable:

- **Non-Friable (less hazardous)** is hard bound fibers and can be found in transite board, roof, floor materials, some plaster and gypsum walls/ceilings.
- **Friable (hazardous)** is soft asbestos material that can crumble and easily releases airborne fibers when disturbed. Friable asbestos can be found in pipe and fitting insulation, applied ceilings, fireproofing, paper wrap (pipes & ducts), and high temperature gaskets.
IDENTIFICATION OF ASBESTOS

You can’t identify asbestos-containing materials with the naked eye. Experienced employees can identify suspected materials. However, they must confirm their suspicion through laboratory sample analysis. PPD has conducted extensive sampling over the years and logged the location of asbestos in various areas. It has been determined that the following materials do contain asbestos in areas on campus:

- Hard pipe insulation that looks like plaster;
- Corrugated paper pipe insulation;
- Sprayed-on insulation;
- Hard wall plaster;
- Ceiling tiles (12” x 12” or smaller);
- Floor tiles (specifically 9” x 9”);
- Roofing materials (singles, felt, flashing);
- Adhesives, caulks and mastic;
- Electrical partitions and cloth

If you see someone cutting, sanding or otherwise damaging these materials, stop them and ask if the material has been identified as non-asbestos. Remember, asbestos fibers can be in the air even if visible dust is not present.
Roger Binny Safe

Asbestos Awareness

ROUTE OF EXPOSURE AND HEALTH EFFECTS

• The primary route of asbestos exposure is through the inhalation of fibers into the lungs, which can lead to cancer, scarring, and chronic inflammation.

• The secondary route is through fluid ingestion; this can lead to cancers of the esophagus, stomach and intestine.

• The risk of health effects are also increased by smoking, concentration level and the duration of exposure.
AVOIDING EXPOSURE

• Asbestos is not harmful until it has been disturbed and made friable (airborne). Almost all Colby buildings contain or have the potential to contain asbestos. Be especially alert in any Colby buildings built prior to 1989.
• When in doubt, verify before disturbing building material, by drilling, cutting, floor maintenance or sanding. You can do this by asking your supervisor about prior sampling, having the material sampled, or checking asbestos testing books (located in Plan Room and in the Assistant Director’s office). It is always better to delay a project than to risk contaminating yourself, your co-workers or the students.
• Always verify before conducting the following procedures in unfamiliar areas:
  ➢ Stripping VAT with abrasive pads without using water
  ➢ Working behind radiators or above hard ceilings where old abandoned piping may be located
  ➢ Removing or working around acoustical or fireproofing layers in old ceilings
  ➢ Removing or drilling through new flooring/carpeting over old VAT flooring
  ➢ Conducting any work or activity on older flooring where it is cracked or broken

BY THE NUMBERS:

#1 Cause of occupational cancer in the United States

30 Million Pounds of asbestos is still used annually in the United States

10,000 Americans die every year from asbestos related diseases
Questions/Discussion:

1. Are you familiar with Colby’s Asbestos Policy? Do you know how to access it if you wanted to review it?
2. How would you check to see if there was asbestos in a new area where you were about to begin removing building material?

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Questions, concerns or comments contact the EHS Director at extension 5504.