

# Asbestos: Verify Before You Disturb the Material

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## Why this matters

Drilling or removing a small piece of material can change the exposure for nearby workers. Before intrusive work, confirm what the information actually covers. Appearance, building age or a quiet work area cannot establish that a material is asbestos-free.

**Objective:** Match the task to material information and identify what to do if coverage or conditions change.

## Key hazards or failure points

Cutting or scraping unknown material; records for the wrong room or layer; unexpected insulation or debris; damaged containment; untrained sampling or cleanup; nearby crews unaware of restrictions.

## Practical controls

- Obtain the building-owner and employer information for the exact material and work area before disturbance. The responsible asbestos personnel determine required assessment, controls and work authorization.
- Keep unknown or suspect material undisturbed and report uncertainty. Protect access through the approved arrangement without touching debris or entering a restricted area.
- Covered asbestos work requires the applicable trained people, competent-person assessment and task-specific controls. An awareness talk does not qualify anyone to sample, remove or clean up asbestos material.

## Verify It in the Field

Match the survey, assessment or material identification to the precise location, task and layers affected. Ask what is outside its coverage. Missing or ambiguous information requires appropriate review before intrusive work.

From outside any restricted area, check the agreed signs, boundaries and routes protecting nearby crews. Report damaged protection or suspect dust without entering, sweeping, touching or taking a sample.

The responsible lead confirms the relevant assessment, work method, authorized people and release conditions. Ask the crew whom to contact when a different layer or condition appears. Record the evidence and limits, not an assumption based on appearance.

## Stop and reassess

Stop disturbance for unexpected material, damage, suspect debris or unclear coverage. Hold affected work for disturbed containment, unauthorized entry or missing required assessment and authorization. Notify the responsible person and follow the approved response; do not improvise cleanup.

## Ask the crew

1. What evidence covers the material we will disturb?
2. Who do we call if the next layer is different?
3. How will nearby workers stay outside the affected area?

**Before disturbance: verify the information and the authorized work conditions.**

Sources: OSHA 1926.1101; EPA asbestos occupant-notification guidance.

Free next step: [JHA/JSA planning & field-verification worksheet](#)

Expanded guidance, references, supervisor check and attendance record accompany this talk.