

2011 FLOOD DAMAGED STRUCTURES

INFORMATION RELATED TO ASBESTOS

The Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (NDHHS), Office of Environmental Health Hazards and Indoor Air recommends properties damaged by the flood of 2011 get inspected for the presence of asbestos prior to renovation, demolition, or conducting a fire burn. This would determine whether additional responsibilities would be required. The Asbestos Program's index page can be found at: http://dhhs.ne.gov/publichealth/Pages/enh_asbestos_index.aspx, and a list of Licensed Asbestos Inspectors at: <http://dhhs.ne.gov/publichealth/Documents/asbestosinspectors.pdf>.

In the case of a natural disaster where a building has been damaged, this inspection should be performed prior to beginning cleanup activities to ensure asbestos containing materials are not being disturbed. Prior to inspection, the debris should be kept wet to minimize the possibility of asbestos exposure. In the event a building has become structurally unstable, demolition can proceed without first having the structure inspected as long as notification requirements have been met. The building should be kept wet to minimize any potential asbestos emissions. After the danger of the unsafe structure has been eliminated, the resulting debris must be inspected or assumed asbestos and be disposed of at a landfill approved to accept asbestos.

Homeowners are eligible to perform an asbestos project on their residential property of four units or less as long as the homeowner, a member of the homeowner's family, or an unpaid volunteer physically perform the activities. The removed material must be properly contained for disposal at a landfill approved to accept asbestos.

Commercial properties must have a Nebraska licensed abatement contractor perform friable asbestos removal.

If the demolition or renovation to a commercial, public, industrial or residential structure will involve greater than 3 square feet or 3 linear feet of friable asbestos containing materials, then the removal of the asbestos is regulated by the NDHHS. For projects that meet these thresholds, a Nebraska licensed contractor and licensed asbestos workers must be used to perform the abatement of the material. If buildings have been demolished or destroyed by the flood of 2011 prior to removing the asbestos, then any debris subsequently contaminated by asbestos must also be handled as asbestos containing waste and be disposed of at a landfill approved to accept asbestos.

The NDHHS must be notified about all abatement projects involving greater than 3 square feet or 3 linear feet of asbestos. The Department of Environmental Quality must also be notified for all demolition projects regardless of whether asbestos is present or not.

Typical notification requirements would require a 10 working day waiting period before proceeding. However, in the case of buildings that have been damaged as a result of the flood of 2011, the NDHHS will waive this 10-day notice requirement. However, notice should be sent to NDHHS within 24 hours of either starting a regulated abatement or demolition project.

Failure to follow these steps could jeopardize individual assistance that may be provided by federal or state programs related to flooding assistance. Further guidance and forms can be accessed by contacting NDHHS at:

DHHS- Division of Public Health, Environmental Health Unit
Office of Environmental Health Hazards & Indoor Air
P.O. Box 95026, 301 Centennial Mall South- 3rd Floor
Lincoln, Nebraska 68509-5026
Phone: 402-471-0386 Fax: 402-471-8833
Toll Free: 888-242-1100, Extension 1 (Nebraska only)
E-mail: DHHS.HealthHazardsIndoorAir@nebraska.gov

Or, by contacting the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency at 402-471-7421.