



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Iowa DNR News

Environmental Services

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Asbestos guidelines to follow during storm cleanup to ensure safety

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In the aftermath of last week's derecho, many Iowans are dealing with the clean-up of storm-damaged buildings.

It's important for the health and safety of people to handle debris cautiously when tearing down structures that might contain asbestos.

Disturbing asbestos-containing material releases tiny fibers that can lodge in human lungs. Although symptoms might not show up for 20 years, exposure to asbestos increases the risk of serious health problems, including cancer and lung disease.

Citizens who must undertake cleanup activities on their residential property should consider following these steps to minimize potential exposure to asbestos:

- Only disturb construction materials that must be removed, and minimize any excess breakage, to prevent the release of dust and fibers into the air
- Wet any materials suspected to contain asbestos to minimize dust (make sure there are no electrical hazards before wetting)
- Do not burn suspect asbestos-containing building products.
- Contact the local landfill or transfer station to determine proper disposal requirements and follow those guidelines.

Before beginning work on public/commercial buildings, federal rules require notifying the DNR and following asbestos removal and disposal requirements.

"Most important, we want people to be safe," said Brian Hutchins, air quality supervisor. "We have a fact sheet to guide people through how to minimize risks and meet federal rule requirements as they clean up disaster debris."

Asbestos has been used in a large number of building materials such as floor tile, linoleum, pipe and boiler insulation, heat duct wrap and joint tape, cementitious transite or slate siding and roofing, asphalt-based roofing and asphalt shingles, ceiling tiles, joint compound, sprayed-on acoustical, decorative texturing and other materials. Asbestos continues to be used in new construction and can be present in any building or home.

Look for the asbestos information sheet and other disposal guidance on DNR's website www.iowadnr.gov/disaster

For questions regarding asbestos requirements contact Tom Wuehr, DNR environmental specialist, at 515-494-8212 or Tom.Wuehr@dnr.iowa.gov