UCI Asbestos Notification

1.0 Introduction

The purpose of this information is to inform UCI Campus personnel of the presence of Asbestos-Containing Construction Materials (ACCM) in University owned buildings. This is in accordance with California law, section 25915 of the Health and Safety Code, which requires that an employer annually notify employees of the presence of ACCM in any building built prior to 1979 and the method being used to control and contain these materials to prevent employee exposure.

1.1 Background on Asbestos

Asbestos is a naturally occurring group of fibrous minerals that have been used extensively in building materials. Asbestos fibers were incorporated in pipe insulation, acoustic plaster, duct and furnace insulation, floor tiles, textiles and hundreds of other building materials.

The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and others distinguish between friable and nonfriable forms of asbestos-containing construction materials (ACCM). Friable ACCM can be “crumbled or reduced to powder by hand pressure.”

1.2 Potential Health Risks

The same properties that make asbestos useful also make it a potential health hazard to those who work with it. Asbestos fibers can enter the body by inhalation or ingestion. The most common route of exposure is from breathing airborne fibers. Inhaled asbestos fibers can become embedded in the tissues of the respiratory or digestive system.

Years of over exposure to asbestos may cause numerous disabling or fatal diseases: asbestosis, lung and gastrointestinal cancer, and mesothelioma. In addition, smoking may increase the chances of developing lung cancer by 92 times for asbestos workers than those who do not smoke or work with asbestos.

Asbestos-containing products may be dangerous if they are damaged and can potentially release asbestos fibers into the air. Intact, sealed, and undisturbed asbestos products do not pose a hazard.

2.0 Asbestos Survey and Sampling

A survey was conducted to identify those areas at UCI where ACCM exist. A copy of this survey is maintained at the following location:

Campus
UCI, Environmental Health and Safety Office
4600 Health Sciences Road, Irvine CA 92697-2725

Many buildings at UCI contain non-friable asbestos materials in public access areas. These materials include vinyl asbestos floor tiles and/or linoleum sheet flooring as well as the mastic used to secure them. In addition, some laboratory and machine shop areas have benches and/or fume hoods constructed of Transite™ and/or colorlith. The asbestos in these materials is bonded with vinyl, epoxy, cement, or other materials and under normal conditions does not pose any danger. If the material is cracked, drilled, sanded, or otherwise disturbed, however, it could result in the release of asbestos fibers into the air, which could present a health risk. Only trained personnel using proper personal protection and containment equipment should do such work.

Other buildings contain spray-applied acoustical material or ceiling tiles containing asbestos. These materials are somewhat friable, but do not present a problem if they are not disturbed. Only trained workers with the proper equipment should perform work that may disturb such materials. These include some of the fire doors used in tower stairwells, and the entrances to mechanical rooms. These doors have a metal label on the inside edge or top identifying them as having a type "B" fire rating of one hour or greater.

Many of the buildings have asbestos materials in areas of restricted public access such as mechanical rooms. These materials include insulation on boilers, heat exchangers, and some hot and cold water plus steam supply lines. In a few instances, asbestos insulated pipes are in public access areas. As long as the outer canvas cover or metal sheathing on the pipes is intact, the insulation presents no potential for exposure. If the protective covering is disturbed, call the UCI Asbestos Coordinator at 824-8791 or 824-8586 and report the situation.

Some thermal system insulation (TSI), surfacing materials, and vinyl and asphalt flooring found in UCI buildings constructed later than 1980 and not included in the survey records may contain asbestos. All TSI and surfacing materials found in such UCI buildings are presumed asbestos-containing materials (PACM) until testing determines that they are asbestos-free. In addition, all vinyl and asphalt flooring in such UCI buildings are also assumed to contain asbestos until testing proves otherwise. Examples of TSI include materials applied to pipes, fittings, boilers, breeching, tanks, ducts or other structural components. Examples of surfacing materials include acoustical plaster on ceilings, fireproofing and other materials that are sprayed, troweled-on, or applied to surfaces.

2.1 Asbestos Management Program

At UCI, Asbestos-Containing Construction Materials are managed in place until they can be safely removed. When warranted, abatement will take priority.

Abatement at UCI is performed under very strict specifications. These specifications include mandatory work practice procedures, removal techniques, clean up and clearance air sampling designated to minimize exposure to employees during removal and to ensure that areas are ready for re-occupancy.

EH&S or a designated EH&S representative oversees asbestos removal work and conducts air sampling. Under the Operations & Maintenance Plan (O&M), UCI Personnel are not currently qualified to perform [1]Class III asbestos work. Removal and/or repairs are handled under contract with specially licensed firms.

Until asbestos materials are completely removed from all our buildings, the following actions are being taken to minimize employee exposure:

1. Continual survey of the campus for asbestos in order to set priorities for corrective action.
2. Response to employee concerns about exposure; evaluation of workplaces and elimination of any hazards as quickly as possible.
3. Maintenance of files documenting survey and sampling efforts for planning and public review.
4. Education of the campus community on the relative hazards of asbestos (The presence of asbestos in the workplace does not constitute a health hazard if well maintained and in good condition.)
5. Performance of air sampling and physical inspection of asbestos-containing work areas.

If you would like additional information regarding asbestos, contact a UCI Campus Asbestos Coordinator at srobb@uci.edu (949-824-8791) OR at mxrincon@uci.edu (949-824-8586).

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[1] *Class III Asbestos Work-Repair and maintenance operations, where ACM, including TSI and surfacing ACM and PACM is likely to be disturbed.