

# CALIFORNIA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

## ENVIRONMENT, HEALTH, AND SAFETY

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**TO:** Caltech Community

**FROM:** Caz Scislowicz, Director - Environment, Health, and Safety Office

**DATE:** November 1, 2019

**SUBJECT:** Annual Asbestos Notification

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Annual written notice of the presence of asbestos-containing building materials is being provided to all campus Faculty, Staff, and Students as required by California Health and Safety Code §25915.2. Copies of this legislation are available in the Environment, Health, and Safety (EHS) Office.

Prior to 1979 asbestos was used extensively in the building industry throughout the United States for thermal insulation, fireproofing, and in structural support materials. At Caltech, asbestos was used to insulate hot water and steam pipes as well as ventilation ducts. It may be found in some attics, mechanical rooms, and in some floor and ceiling tiles.

The mere presence of asbestos in a building does not necessarily mean that a health hazard exists. Asbestos-containing building materials are not a health threat unless asbestos fibers become airborne and are inhaled.

Exposure to airborne asbestos increases your risk of developing lung disease. Three of the major health effects associated with asbestos exposure are: 1) lung cancer; 2) mesothelioma, a rare form of cancer that is found in the thin lining of the lung, chest and the abdomen and heart; and 3) asbestosis, a serious progressive, long-term, non-cancer disease of the lungs.

In areas where the asbestos is not airborne when bonded or encapsulated, such as floor tiles or painted and properly maintained insulation materials, there is little or no risk to health.

Accordingly, it is important not to disturb asbestos-containing materials. Caltech's policy restricts work on asbestos-containing materials to properly trained and equipped personnel. Moving, drilling, cutting, or otherwise disturbing such materials can pose a health risk and should not be attempted by untrained personnel. Campus Faculty, Staff, and Students should immediately notify EHS if they observe suspected asbestos-containing materials which are not properly maintained.

The Environment, Health, and Safety Office maintains records of asbestos sampling and air monitoring results performed during the course of asbestos abatement work. These records are available for review by appointment by contacting EHS at extension 6727.



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