

# CALIFORNIA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

## ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH & SAFETY

**TO:** Caltech Community

**FROM:** Lauriane Quenee, Senior Director - Environmental Health & Safety

**DATE:** November 1, 2024

**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, Postdoctoral Scholars, Staff, and Students as required by California Health and Safety Code §25915.2. Copies of this legislation are available in the Environmental Health & Safety (EH&S) Office.

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

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.

In areas where the asbestos is bonded or encapsulated, such as floor tiles or properly maintained insulation materials, there is little or no risk to health.

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.

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, Postdoctoral Scholars, Staff, and Students should immediately notify EH&S if they observe suspected asbestos-containing materials which are not properly maintained.

The Environmental Health & Safety Office maintains records of asbestos sampling and air monitoring results performed during asbestos abatement work. These records are available for review by appointment by contacting EH&S at extension 6727 or writing [safety@caltech.edu](mailto:safety@caltech.edu).