FUNDAMENTAL 55: Asbestos Hazard Awareness



Key Takeaways:

– Knowing what asbestos is
– Remembering examples of asbestos at workplace environments
– Understanding the health effects of asbestos exposure
– Actively preventing exposure to asbestos on the job
– Knowing what to do when exposed to asbestos

Course Description

It is crucial to protect your high-risk workforce from this notorious, airborne, health hazard. Asbestos is a natural, fibrous silicate mineral. It is proven that exposure to Asbestos is extremely dangerous; microscopic asbestos fibers, when inhaled, cause certain types of fatal lung disease, which makes asbestos hazard awareness an essential training topic.

Asbestos was used in innumerable construction products before 1980, and many buildings built before that year are considered to have used asbestos materials (any material containing more that 1% asbestos) during construction.

Nowadays, industrial activity including salvage, demolition, and construction, often present Asbestos exposure risks. Even work like brake and clutch repairs or building maintenance and cleaning, can present exposure risks – it comes down to what you're working with and where.
Asbestos Exposure Health Risks – Airborne asbestos is a health risk because the tiny fibers can be breathed in unknowingly. Inhaled asbestos fibers create serious diseases for the lungs and other organs that may not appear until years after initial exposure. Asbestos fibers act like every other type of airborne particle and move out of the air just like dust or soot. In many past instances, fibers accumulation on clothing was a serious problem; these fibers would be carried away from the worksite and into homes where others would be exposed. – Diseases like asbestosis, mesothelioma, and lung cancer can all originate from chronic exposure to airborne asbestos. Asbestosis is a disease that builds scar-like tissue up in the lungs and often progresses to disability and death. Mesothelioma is cancer in the chest cavity lining; a rare condition, but it is

almost always fatal due to rapid spreading. – Asbestos in the built environment does not always create a hazard, permitting it is contained. Controlling asbestos problem areas typically involves coating the outside surface of the concerning area, to prevent the asbestos fibers from becoming airborne. The most important thing to remember from this is that you should never disturb or break the surface of newly discovered asbestos material. Leave it alone and then mitigate as quickly as possible by stabilizing the material. OSHA guidelines require you use signs to mark areas where asbestos may be disturbed, and label the identified asbestos-containing materials. When your team works places that are likely to have asbestos, you must provide additional asbestos hazard awareness training, coordinate annual medical exams, and supply the proper protective equipment. Also, you must provide changing rooms and access to hygiene facilities. Employers and supervisors are responsible for identifying hazards in the workplace, including asbestos. Workers are responsible for reporting unsafe conditions, like the release or potential release of asbestos. For example, if employees are disturbing asbestos material, the situation must be reported immediately; workers need to get in touch with a health or safety professional. Minimizing Asbestos Exposure You are also responsible for reducing overall exposure to asbestos. The easiest way to you can reduce exposure is by staying out of areas containing asbestos, unless you are required to work there, and keep others away. Do not enter posted asbestos hazard or danger areas without specific training and proper protective equipment. If you do have to work in areas where the possibility of airborne asbestos exists, do not spend any more time in the area than necessary. Again, if you suspect that material may contain asbestos, make it known, promptly. Years ago, the rules surrounding respirators and the technology of the personal protective equipment were generally less protective than the standards of today, which resulted in the preventable deaths of many industrial laborers. As a result, litigation resolving disputes and claims associated with mesothelioma—directly linked to asbestos exposure—is a thriving legal business. Perhaps you’ve seen the national advertisements over the years?