

GENERAL INFORMATION

DRYWALL

We have collected drywall samples in your district and for numerous other clients. The vast majority of these samples do not contain asbestos in the drywall, the tape, the joint compound or the texturizing or finish coat. When we do find asbestos it is usually in the texturizing coat. It usually is at a 1 to 5% concentration, but since it's in the surface coat it is subject to abuse (contact, sanding, etc.) and it can release fibers. Where we have identified drywall materials to contain asbestos we have included the proper information in our inspection reports and management plans. It is where we do not find asbestos that a potential problem exists.

Hazard Management Services, Inc. (HMS, Inc.) and many other consultants do not believe there is an accurate sampling protocol for determining asbestos in drywall materials. For example, we have sampled one piece of finished drywall where the results were "0%", "trace" in the skim coat and "1-5%" in the skim coat. We have also sampled all the walls in a room and found one sample on one wall positive and all the rest negative (five samples). We have also taken 12 samples on both sides of one hallway (120 feet long) and had two samples contain "5-10%" in the skim coat, one sample contain "trace" amounts in the joint compound and the other nine to contain no asbestos. In other words, sampling drywall according to AHERA methods is not necessarily an accurate assessment of what is present. At least, we are not confident of our results.

The reasons for these discrepancies in findings include renovation activities, patches, inconsistent mixing practices by the original installers, etc. Often times, painting, wallpapering or other wall treatments make it impossible to determine if materials are homogeneous. This is particularly true in office areas where the geometry of the walls changes frequently and these changes are obscured by painting, etc.

So what does this all mean and what should you do about it? HMS, Inc. recommends the following procedures be followed in areas where drywall has been analyzed and no asbestos has been detected.

Small Projects

If you are only going to attach nails or tacks, drill a small hole or cut a small opening and if these projects involve only a very small amount of drywall, no special precautions are necessary, but you may want to dampen the affected area with water to reduce dust levels. If the area involves several inches of drywall a more effective way to reduce dust is to apply a viscous lubricant such as grease, vaseline or K-Y jelly to the affected area.

Large Projects

If you are going to be cutting into full sheets of drywall or removing substantial amounts of drywall, HMS, Inc. recommends that you take several samples of the affected materials and have them analyzed. These samples can safely be collected by your own staff. Please call HMS, Inc. for advice on the proper method of collection and how the samples should be packaged for mailing to a laboratory.