



This document was prepared by McGill's Project Management group to provide building occupants information concerning construction works involving asbestos-containing materials.

What is asbestos?

Asbestos is the generic name for a variety of fibrous minerals found naturally in rock formations around the world. Because asbestos fibres are strong, durable and non-combustible, they were widely used by industry, mainly in construction and friction materials. (Health Canada, 2015)

What could be the health effects of asbestos fibres exposure?

Asbestos poses health risks **only when fibres are present in the air that people breathe**. How exposure to asbestos can affect you depends on: the concentration of asbestos fibres in the air, how long the exposure lasted, how often you were exposed, the size of the asbestos fibres inhaled or the amount of time since the initial exposure.

When inhaled in significant quantities, asbestos fibres can cause asbestosis (a scarring of the lungs which makes breathing difficult), mesothelioma (a rare cancer of the lining of the chest or abdominal cavity) and lung cancer. The link between exposure to asbestos and other types of cancers is less clear. (Health Canada, 2015)

What is the risk for me if I am close to the construction area?

McGill's project management team has performed hundreds of construction projects involving asbestos-containing materials. They start by investigating the area of intervention and when asbestos is located, an environmental professional is mandated to write all the technical documentation to safely manage asbestos. The safety measures are following guidelines that are strictly legislated by the *Safety Code for the Construction Industry*. To better protect the safety and health of its community, McGill University goes beyond those guidelines.

How can I be sure that all the protective measures will be in place and efficient?

The project management team with the help of specialized environmental professionals will make sure that the appropriate risk level is established (low, moderate, alleviated high risk or high risk), then the work methods will be written. Those work methods will be reviewed by McGill's construction safety professionals. As part of their duties, those internal safety professionals also patrol construction sites every day across campus and asbestos is closely looked after. When works are performed under high risk protocol, an external environmental professional will inspect the asbestos work area and test the air on a daily basis. Under those circumstances, three air tests will be taken: one in the work zone, one in the entry vestibule and



one in an adjacent occupied area (corridor, classroom, office, etc.). The results are publicly available and are transmitted on a regular basis to the building director.

As you will notice in the table below, extra precautions are taken by the University to ensure your safety throughout the construction project.

Safety measures	QC Legal requirements	McGill practices
Air tests TLV-TWA (chrysotile)	< 1 fiber/cc	< 0.5 fiber/cc
Air tests TLV-TWA (amosite)	< 0.2 fiber/cc	< 0.1 fiber/cc
Daily air tests in the work zone	Yes	Yes
Daily air tests in the adjacent occupied zone		Yes
Installation of a window in high risk enclosure (better monitoring work methods)		Yes
Zero tolerance policy (could lead to expulsion)	Yes	Yes
Supervision by external consultants during high risk abatement		Yes
Supervision by McGill construction safety professionals on all risk levels		Yes
Internal response protocol for incidents that may involve asbestos		Yes

Questions?

Should you have questions on the project, asbestos or concerns about your safety, please contact your building director or the project manager.

Useful links:

- <http://healthycanadians.gc.ca/healthy-living-vie-saine/environment-environnement/outdoor-air-exterieur/asbestos-amiante-eng.php>
- <http://www.mcgill.ca/ehs/programs-and-services/plant/asbestospolicy>
- http://www.mcgill.ca/ehs/files/ehs/asbestos_incident_response_protocols_steps_final_0.pdf