

LEAD & ASBESTOS PROTOCOL FOR USA829 WORKERS

Most of us have worked on jobsites where there is lead paint and asbestos. This is especially dangerous in places where the lead paint is deteriorated and where asbestos is "friable," that is, powdering or flaking into a dust. These are not conditions workers should tolerate and it is illegal for employers to put us in such worksites. Employers also violate lead and asbestos laws if they ask you to remove or paint over damaged lead paint, or clean up the asbestos or lead dust.

If there is lead paint or substances at a location or shop that you think may be lead or asbestos, take the following steps.

1. Notify someone in authority. Workers should first point out the potential problem to the Shop Steward and Charge person. At this point, we suggest the Steward and the Charge consider the employer's attitude and actions with regard to safety and health issues. If they think that pointing out this problem will cause the employer to consider the workers as troublemakers or complainers, call the union office and arrange for a visit from the safety officer.

If there is no time to arrange a visit (e.g., it is a one day commercial shoot), go to the next step instead.

2. Get samples in a plastic zip top envelop. It is best to have the sample taken by an industrial hygienist like your Safety Officer to ensure it is taken safely and to avoid potential legal challenges later. But if this can't be done, a business rep, the Shop Steward, or the Charge can do it. Be sure there are two people present, one who will witness where the sample was taken from and what mark was put on the envelop, etc. If possible, take a picture of the area from which the sample was taken.

If the material is paint, place a few chips or scrapings in the envelope. If it is asbestos insulation, consider how to take the sample without raising dust. A small piece about an inch square will be more than enough. If it is debris on the floor or dust, a spoonful or so will be enough.

3. Get the sample to a reliable laboratory. Call the Safety Officer for the location of the nearest laboratory and the type of test you should ask to be done. The Union will reimburse you for the cost.

Who ever takes the sample should take a direct route to the laboratory from the job site. Do not let the samples out of your control for even a minute. Leaving the samples in your car, handing them to a colleague for a while, or any similar scenario will break the legal chain of custody for those samples.

4. Interpreting the lab results. Arrange to have the lab fax the results to the Safety Officer and leave your number so you can be contacted as soon as the results are available. The Safety Officer will explain the results and make recommendations. Union officers will decide what actions to take and keep you informed.