

How to Maintain Asbestos Flooring Safely

Got Asbestos?

Whether you know it or not, if the vinyl tile floor in your facility was in place before 1980, chances are the flooring contains asbestos. This should not cause a panic, you should know if the floor contains asbestos so it can be maintained properly.

How do I know if my floor contains asbestos?

You can't tell simply by looking at a floor if it is Vinyl Asbestos Flooring (VAT), it looks similar to the 12 x 12 tiles we commonly see every day that is often referred to as Vinyl Composition Tile (VCT). The only sure way to find out is to have it tested by a certified lab. The Asbestos Resource Center identified below has a listing of accredited labs.

An excellent place to find more information is [the Asbestos Resource Center](#). Here, you can view information for asbestos tiles manufactured by Armstrong every year from 1954-1980. The site includes photos of various styles and descriptions of flooring which may help you visually identify the tile on your own floors.

Why is Asbestos a problem?

Asbestos was commonly used including insulation and as a filler for plastics including flooring. Unfortunately, it was determined that asbestos fibers that become airborne and inhaled can produce chronic, incurable lung diseases.

How do I safely maintain asbestos containing floors?

First, understand these two terms: FRIABLE and NON-FRIABLE

From the Asbestos Hazard & Emergency Response Act (AHERA) "The term "friable asbestos-containing material" means any asbestos-containing material applied on ceilings, walls, structural members, piping, duct work, or any other part of a building which when dry may be crumbled, pulverized or reduced to powder by hand pressure. The term includes non-friable asbestos-containing material after such previously non-friable material becomes damaged to the extent that when dry it may be crumbled, pulverized, or reduced to powder by hand pressure.

The environmental protection agency (EPA) has determined that in many cases, the best course of action for handling many types of asbestos, including flooring is a "leave in place" strategy for flooring that is in a non-friable condition. When asbestos containing flooring is left intact and properly maintained, the flooring does not pose a health risk to building occupants. There is only potential for exposure when the material becomes friable through damage or improper maintenance which may result in the release of asbestos fibers.

Asbestos Hazard and Emergency Response Act (AHERA)

Schools have specific requirements: The Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act (AHERA) and its regulations require public school districts and non-profit schools including charter schools and schools affiliated with religious institutions to:

- Inspect their schools for asbestos-containing building material
- Prepare management plans and to take action to prevent or reduce asbestos hazards

What process should I be careful with on asbestos containing flooring?

• **Stripping and Finishing:** OSHA and EPA offer the following guidance:

1. When stripping of floors becomes necessary, the machine used for stripping the finish should use the least aggressive pad as possible.
2. The machine used for stripping should be run at a low rate of speed, 175 -300 rpm.
3. Never perform dry stripping. Always strip floors while wet. Do not operate a floor machine with an abrasive pad on unfinished flooring that may contain asbestos.
4. After Stripping, the floor should be thoroughly cleaned while wet.
5. Finishing: Use of a Sealer followed by a high solids finish.
6. Protection: Use of protective chair glides is recommended to avoid gauging or scratching a floor which could result in unintended release of asbestos fibers.

• **Chemical Free Stripping:** Some companies are promoting equipment and or processes that claim to strip floors without the use of chemicals. This process typically will use an orbital machine and a very aggressive pad. While this process can be effective for removing finish coats from floors, caution should be exercised before using this type of equipment and pads on vinyl asbestos flooring and this process should never be done “DRY”

Multi-Clean Products used for Maintaining Asbestos Flooring

Sealers: Multi-Clean advises using a semi-permanent sealer for asbestos tile. This type of seal is not designed to be stripped like normal floor sealers. Rather it leaves behind a stronger protective film on the floor. Use two coats of Multi-Clean Stainless.

Read the Technical Data Sheet on [Stainless Seal](#)

Finishes: The finish selected depends upon the level of appearance and maintenance regimen for this flooring. Multi-Clean has created a guide to help select the best finish for a particular maintenance regimen. View the Multi-Clean Floor Finish [Selection Guide](#)

Strippers: If stripping becomes necessary, use Inferno, Stampede, Mustang and Ultra Stripper. Ultra Stripper is a low odor; non-corrosive green seal certified floor stripper.

Read the Technical Data Sheets on Multi-Clean Floor Strippers:

[INFERNO](#), [STAMPEDE](#), [ULTRA STRIPPER](#)

Cleaners: For daily cleaning, using a mild cleaner like Century Maintenance Cleaner is recommended. [Century Maintenance Cleaner](#)