

ABATED ASBESTOS HAZARD AT NAS JOINT RESERVE BASE NEW ORLEANS

Asbestos refers to a group of naturally occurring minerals with properties that make them excellent insulation materials. Before the United States banned asbestos in the late 50's, it was widely used in insulation, fireproofing, soundproofing, and many other applications. Since that time, the use of asbestos has also been prohibited in many other countries.

Asbestos is not a health hazard as long as it remains intact. It's only when an asbestos-containing material is disturbed that asbestos fibers are released. *Friable* asbestos, such as occurs in sprayed-on insulation,

crumbles into powder when disturbed, releasing asbestos fibers. Friable asbestos is considered health hazardous since inhalation of excessive amounts of asbestos fibers increases the risk of serious illness. Inhalation of asbestos fibers has been found to cause lung diseases, including the condition known as asbestosis, and lung cancer.



Deteriorating ceiling tiles containing friable asbestos

Non-friable asbestos fibers, found in materials such as resilient flooring, are resistant to breaking down into powder but can still be a source of asbestos exposure during cutting, grinding, or sanding operations. Navy policy is to eliminate asbestos hazards on its ships and shore facilities by substituting asbestos-free material wherever

possible. Asbestos and asbestos-containing materials are removed under very strict conditions that include measures to protect everyone working on the asbestos-removal project and isolation of project activities to protect the public.

At Naval Air Station (NAS) Joint Reserve Base, New Orleans approximately 76 Navy and Air Force personnel were at risk of exposure to airborne asbestos from severely deteriorated asbestos-containing ceiling tiles in the restrooms. The walls and ceilings of passageways and the supply warehouse also contained deteriorated friable asbestos.

With funding from the Navy's Hazard Abatement Program, all damaged asbestos was removed and replaced with suitable, non-hazardous materials.

