

FAQs

1. What are hazardous materials and what are some examples that may be discovered in a simple renovation?

The hazards of primary concern are asbestos, lead, and silica.

- *Asbestos may be present in architectural finishes such as:*
 - *vinyl floor tiles*
 - *vinyl sheet flooring (“linoleum”)*
 - *drywall walls and ceiling*
 - *plaster walls and ceiling*
 - *stipple texture on walls and ceiling*
 - *ceiling tiles*
 - *window putty*
 - *loose attic insulation (vermiculite)*
 - *pipe and duct insulation and tape*
 - *cement siding and stucco*
 - *adhesives, putties, mastics and patching compounds.*
- *Lead may be present in all painted or coated surfaces.*
- *Silica is present in concrete and may be present in masonry, ceramic tiles, stucco and drywall.*

2. Are hazardous materials more likely to be present in older buildings?

Yes. Old building should be suspected to contain asbestos materials and lead based paints. New buildings are less likely to contain these materials, but this will be assessed by the Hazardous Materials Team.

3. What is hazardous materials abatement?

Hazardous materials abatement refers to the work procedures that ensure workers and occupants are not exposed to dangerous levels of contaminants (asbestos, lead or silica) when building materials are disturbed. Abatement also includes thorough clean-up to remove residual materials, hazardous dust and airborne contaminants from the occupied area.

4. If hazardous materials are present, what is required to abate?

Abatement is required when hazardous materials are disturbed, or if they are uncovered during renovations. Safe work procedures must be followed to ensure worker and occupant protection.

5. Who is responsible for abatement triggered by tenant alterations?

The tenant is responsible for any abatement required due to tenant alterations.

6. What will the City do to assist me in identifying whether hazardous materials are present?

The City's Hazardous Materials Team will identify hazardous materials in City-owned buildings. Tenants should not attempt to identify these on their own.

7. What is the Hazardous Materials Team and what do they do?

Hazardous Materials Team (HMT) is a group of technicians who perform assessments and over-see abatement projects on City-owned buildings. They maintain an inventory database of hazardous materials.

8. Who can do hazardous material abatement work?

Abatement can only be done by City-approved contractors. HMT will provide this list to tenants.

9. If a permit is required for the alterations, is Landlord review still necessary or is it a duplication with the building permit process?

Landlord review is always required whether or not the work triggers permits. Any works on a City property by the tenant requiring a permit will also require Landlord approval via an Owner's Undertaking. A building or trade permit on City property cannot be processed without an Owner's Undertaking issued by the Landlord. If a permit is required, the hazardous materials assessment will be part of Owner's Undertaking review.

10. What is WorkSafeBC?

WorksafeBC is the Workers' Compensation Board of BC. WorksafeBC is the primary regulator of workplace and worker safety including hazardous materials management in BC.

11. What is the importance of designating a 'prime contractor' where abatement work is required?

Under the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation, the prime contractor is responsible for submitting a Notice of Project (NOP) to WorksafeBC prior to starting a construction project (with some exceptions based on size and scope). The prime contractor is responsible for submitting a Notice of Project Abatement (NOPA) for any project that is expected to disturb asbestos or lead-based paint. The general contractor is responsible for hazardous materials management, with monitoring and oversight by HMT.

Please contact your City contact or 3 1 1 if you have any questions about hazardous materials.