

**REDMOND FIRE DEPARTMENT
STANDARD OPERATING GUIDELINES**

SAFETY – 003

DATE: DECEMBER 2, 2016

ASBESTOS EXPOSURE DURING EMERGENCY INCIDENTS

FIRE CHIEF: TOMMY SMITH

Purpose: The purpose of this procedure is to provide for employee safety and establishes procedures for the testing, identification and decontamination of personal protective clothing due to suspected or known asbestos exposure.

Originator: The Fire Chief, or his designee, shall be responsible for the content, revision and review of this policy.

Procedures:

Asbestos Awareness – Asbestos is a naturally-occurring fiber utilized in building materials which is invisible to the naked eye and can cause respiratory illness when inhaled, including asbestosis, mesothelioma, and cancer. When asbestos is suspected in a structure during firefighting or rescue operations, personnel need to assume that it is present and take necessary precautions. Protecting personnel from unnecessary exposure requires knowledge of this hazard and diligence in keeping personnel safe from its affects.

Any time asbestos is suspected or known to be present in a structure; all personnel are required to utilize self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) within and in proximity to, IDLH conditions. This requirement includes wearing appropriate protective clothing to prevent contamination to the skin and hair.

Section I – Remove Protective Clothing

Personnel who are suspected or known to have been exposed or contaminated with asbestos fibers need to be especially cautious when removing their SCBA and clothing. All necessary steps should be taken for personnel to reduce the potential inhalation exposure which is present on their clothing and equipment. Following is the procedure for properly removing protective clothing. (Refer to Emergency Operations; Decontamination of PPE SOG – 008) for generalized procedures for PPE decontamination. For asbestos specific decontamination and cleaning procedures, follow the Section 1 procedures as described.

1. Prior to removing protective clothing, (coats, pants, helmet, hood, boots, gloves), personnel should be visually inspected for large particles, dust, insulation, etc. Exposed personnel will be assisted by another personnel member (as assigned by the IC) who are in appropriate protective clothing. (Coveralls, respiratory protection, hood gloves.)

2. Assisting personnel will wash down the exposed personnel using a soft water spray and will concentrate on the head, SCBA mask area, hands, seam areas, and areas where the fabric overlaps, such as in zipper and snap areas.
3. At no time are personnel to dry-brush debris off protective clothing. Doing so may initiate asbestos fibers and other products into the air, creating a greater inhalation hazard for those in the immediate area.
4. Assisting personnel will prepare a double-layered biohazard bag in a rolled-open position on the ground in front of the exposed firefighter.
5. The exposed firefighter will step into the double-bag.
6. Without removing the firefighters SCBA mask, the assisting personnel will assist with the removal of the SCBA belt and shoulder straps. Assisting personnel should hold the SCBA in proximity of the firefighter so that he/she can continue breathing positive-pressure air through the SCBA.
7. The firefighter will then carefully remove the coat and lower it into the bag.
8. The firefighter will then carefully remove the pants and carefully roll them down around the boots lower while in the bag.
9. The firefighter will then step out of the turnout boots and step out of the double bag.
10. Assisting personnel will assist the firefighter to step away from the contaminated clothing, while continuing to carry the SCBA.
11. Assisting personnel will wash the SCBA mask with a soft water spray to wash away any debris from the mask and skin.
12. The firefighter will then remove the SCBA mask and hand it to the assisting personnel. Depending on the amount of debris and contamination on the mask, it may require bagging for testing and decontamination, or may be washed thoroughly with soap and water by assisting personnel to remove debris.
13. If necessary, this process may require more aggressive decontamination when significant contamination occurs. This determination is made at the discretion of the Incident Commander.
14. All personnel at the scene will submit a hazardous materials exposure report and the Incident Commander will ensure the appropriate documentation records are maintained.
15. Health Force Physician/Medical Director will review each incidence of asbestos exposure to identify personnel evaluation and treatment modalities.

Section II – Testing

Testing for Asbestos exposures will occur under the guidance of the Redmond Fire Department Health and Safety Officer. All personnel performing firefighting activities will be in protective clothing with appropriate respiratory protection during all phases of firefighting operations including overhaul and investigation.

Air Sampling will occur whenever practical, but always before the investigation phase of a structure fire or other incidents where asbestos exposure can be expected to occur:

- Structural Firefighting- Assume the presence of Asbestos when active firefighting occurs within a structure of Pre-1990 construction or that is otherwise suspected to contain asbestos.
- Overhaul – During overhaul operations and particularly when building deconstruction is occurring to locate to hidden fire, the presence of Asbestos should be assumed in pre-1990 buildings.
- Mop-Up – During the mop-up phase of firefighting, all personnel should be in full protective gear.
- Investigation – The investigation phase of a structure fire can be from a few hours to several days in duration. During this phase, the investigators will coordinate with the local Washington State Industrial Hygienist to determine the types of sampling needed in order to determine the presence and extent of asbestos or other hazards exposures contained in the building. If Asbestos is determined to be present, then a sample set of turnout gear will be tagged out of service, isolated and reported as an exposure to the on duty Battalion Chief or Incident Commander.

Samples will be forwarded to an appropriate laboratory for testing and results. Timeframes of the return of the results will be dependent on the suspected presence and severity of the exposure to personnel. Results of the testing will be provided to the appropriate Redmond Fire Department leadership within 5 days of receipt. If results are remarkable or significant, the results should be delivered to exposed personnel as soon as possible, verbally or in writing. Significant results will be reviewed by Health Force and the Medical Director as soon as possible in order to determine the appropriate course of action.

Section III – Decontamination and Cleaning

Normal and routine cleaning of PPE shall be handled in house with the department turnout gear washer/extractors. The Central Purchasing Officer will coordinate PPE gear testing, pickup and delivery if commercial testing or decontamination is necessary.

If an employee suspects their PPE has been contaminated with asbestos or other hazardous materials, the employee will notify their Company Officer, Health and Safety Officer and the Central Purchasing Officer verbally and in writing the need for “Advanced Cleaning”. The PPE will be bagged and tagged as noted in the above described procedures by the employee and personnel assisting.

