

Contractors & Tradesmen Working Outdoors

What To Do If You Find Vermiculite and Asbestos Around A Home or Business

Vermiculite in Libby

For several decades, vermiculite was commonly used in and around homes in Lincoln County for a variety of applications, including as a soil additive, construction aggregate, and attic insulation.



If vermiculite is present, it might contain Libby Amphibole asbestos (LA). Exposure to LA could lead to such serious diseases as asbestosis, lung cancer, and mesothelioma. It was not possible for EPA

to remove (or to even know about) *all* the vermiculite in the area. In some cases, vermiculite might be intentionally left in sealed walls, home foundations, and other relatively inaccessible areas. Construction, remodeling, or landscaping involving digging might uncover vermiculite following cleanup at a property.

Always ask the homeowner if they know where buried vermiculite might be. ARP might have information on the property based on the investigation, design, and cleanup that has been completed. When calling ARP, you will need to provide the address, location of the work, and the likely depth of excavation.



It is possible that you might unexpectedly find vermiculite after starting your work, perhaps by uncovering it while doing any major outdoor project. You are strongly encouraged to not disturb it in any way that might cause LA to become airborne.

Precautionary Steps to Take So You Can Get On With Your Job

If you encounter vermiculite, it is likely that you will be exposed to Libby Amphibole asbestos. If you choose to continue working, take the following simple steps:

1. **Always notify the resident.** If they haven't already told you about it, they might not know.
2. **Stop work to assess the volume** of vermiculite. Cover or wet down the material, if possible.
3. **For very small quantities** of vermiculite, such as a handful, it is recommended you wet the area and contact the **Asbestos Resource Program (ARP)** for appropriate evaluation and assistance. **If possible, leave it alone.** If the material is buried, leave it there. It's better to have it buried than at the surface.
4. **For larger quantities** of vermiculite such as when it was used as fill around pipes, around other structures, or as bulk fill (you may have sparkling soil) **do not disturb the material – call the Asbestos Resource Program (ARP) immediately.**



Vermiculite shown leaking from siding on the exterior of a structure



Lincoln County Asbestos Resource Program (ARP)
(406) 291-5335

For more information visit: larp.org

Libby Asbestos is Toxic

It should be avoided or handled with extreme care. Exposure to Libby Amphibole asbestos has resulted in disease in workers and non-workers who have had contact with contaminated materials. Take care not to bring any contaminated clothing or material back to your home or business. Treat any asbestos containing material as regulated material and comply with all state and local regulations. The health risk from exposure to all asbestos depends greatly on the amount of asbestos in the material you are disturbing and how long the exposure lasts. There is no known threshold risk level for asbestos-related materials, and any exposure will increase the risk of asbestos-related disease.

If you take the basic precautions outlined in this fact sheet, your risk from exposure will be less.

Common dust or surgical masks are not effective against asbestos fibers!



Wearing a respirator mask with a P-100 fine particulate HEPA filter is the best way to avoid breathing asbestos fibers. However, they must be used properly or exposure may still occur.

For more information on respirator requirements, visit OSHA's website: www.osha.gov/respiratory-protection

Learn about the risks of asbestos exposure and basic precautions by reviewing the Best Management Practices (BMP) resource fact sheets available at the **Lincoln County Asbestos Resource Program** or on the website: lcarp.org

- **Reducing Asbestos Exposure** – *How to reduce exposure to asbestos when renovating or excavating*
- **Lincoln County Do-It-Yourselfers** – *What to do if you find vermiculite or asbestos*
- **Demolition Activities** – *Precautionary steps to take before tearing down structures*
- **Contractors & Tradesmen Working Indoors** – *What to do if you find vermiculite or asbestos*
- **Libby and Troy Residents** – *Vermiculite or Asbestos in or around your home or business*
- **Yard Work and Gardening Activities** – *What to do if you find vermiculite or asbestos*
- **13 Simple Steps to Protect from Libby Asbestos** – *How to reduce exposure to asbestos*

Who Can I Contact With Questions About Asbestos?



**ARP
HOTLINE
(406) 291-5335**



**Montana
Asbestos Control
Program
(406) 444-5300**

The DEQ or ARP might send personnel out to inspect a situation involving vermiculite or LA. That guidance might include advising the owner to allow a licensed asbestos contractor or inspector to take samples, conduct cleanup, or take other special measures to reduce the risk of asbestos exposure. A list of licensed contractors and inspectors can be provided by contacting DEQ or ARP.

Montana law requires that employers hire a licensed inspector to determine if asbestos is present before doing any work. Asbestos that is not associated with the Libby vermiculite mine is still regulated by the Montana DEQ. If non-Libby asbestos is found, it should be dealt with according to Montana regulations. Explore Montana DEQ's Asbestos web site at: www.deq.mt.gov/Asbestos