

Hurricane Preparedness – The Threat of Asbestos Exposure After a Hurricane

The height of hurricane season can quickly inspire residents within hurricane-prone regions of the United States to prepare for the possibility of a disastrous storm by stocking up on food supplies, water and gasoline resources, as well as materials to reinforce and protect homes. Unfortunately, not many are aware of the eminent threat of asbestos exposure in the wake of a destructive hurricane, and as a result do not know how to prepare or deal with the risk of exposure once a storm has passed.

In an effort to provide the public with valuable information on how to prepare homes and safely deal with the threat of asbestos exposure, the Mesothelioma Cancer Center has created an informative section on their website that specifically addresses asbestos exposure and hurricanes, as well as other natural disasters.

Why Asbestos is a Threat After a Natural Disaster

Throughout most of the twentieth century asbestos was widely used in countless construction materials. Over time, these materials degrade and may become damaged due to a number of forces, such as renovation, remodeling, or unexpected natural disasters.

Asbestos exposure is a major concern because the material is highly toxic and is known to cause a variety of terminal diseases, including asbestosis, lung cancer, and [mesothelioma](#). Unfortunately, these diseases are almost always diagnosed in late stages of development and are highly resistant to treatment. For example, [mesothelioma treatments](#) rarely cure the aggressive cancer since the illness is usually diagnosed in a late stage of development.

To help prevent asbestos exposure, it is important to know what products within the home have the potential to contain this toxic material. The following list includes common construction materials that may contain asbestos:

- Roofing
- Ceiling materials
- Certain types of flooring
- Asbestos siding
- Acoustical plaster
- Insulation
- Pipe covering
- Caulking, spackle, and sealing
- Plumbing
- Asbestos paneling
- Paint

How to Prevent Exposure

Homeowners can personally assess their home for [asbestos products](#), but it can be very difficult to tell if a product does contain asbestos. Considering this, it is wise to hire a licensed professional abatement contractor to inspect the home for potential sources of asbestos contamination. If asbestos materials are found, the contractor can advise the best and most cost-effective method of remediation that will help prevent exposure in the event of a natural disaster. Homeowners who decide not to contact a professional should:

- Be very careful when inspecting the home and be cautious to not disturb any potentially contaminated materials

- Put on comprehensive protective gear, including body-covering clothes, gloves, boots, and HEPA filter masks when working around suspicious materials
- Completely wet down all materials that may contain asbestos (this will help to keep asbestos fibers from becoming airborne, but is not considered a replacement for the safety and security of hiring a professional)
- Be aware that any effort to repair or abate asbestos products should be performed by a licensed professional. Safe asbestos abatement is very complex and it can be very expensive to purchase all the supplies needed to properly avoid exposure.

For more information on hurricane preparedness and how to prevent asbestos exposure in the wake of a hurricane, please visit the Mesothelioma Cancer Center's pages on [asbestos and natural disasters](#).