



**The Texas Department of State Health Services
(DSHS) Launches School-Focused Asbestos
Campaign: “Simple Asbestos Management”
For School Administrators**

ARTICLE for Newsletters

In Texas, we expect our educational institutions to create a safe learning environment for children, faculty and school staff. But many schools built in the 1970’s and before may contain asbestos building materials. When left undisturbed, asbestos fibers are not dangerous but can harm health when disturbed and the fibers are inhaled by children and adults. To protect health of students, teachers and staff in Texas public and private non-profit schools, federal and state regulations require that schools identify, document and manage all asbestos-containing building materials in each school facility.

Asbestos, a naturally-occurring mineral that is resistant to heat and corrosion, was commonly used in building materials from the 1940s to 1970s. Asbestos is a serious health hazard, and has been linked to cancers, mesothelioma and asbestosis.

This dangerous mineral may exist in thousands of educational institutions across Texas. According to a 2005 report by the Bush School of Government and Public Service at Texas A&M University, more than half of the 11,384 school buildings in Texas were built prior to 1978. Since peak asbestos usage occurred through the late 1970s, older schools are more likely to contain asbestos.

That’s why the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) introduced “Simple Asbestos Management” (SAM), a website designed to keep Texas school buildings safe for students, teachers and staff. The website is an easy, simple way for school administrators to learn about their responsibilities related to asbestos management and take meaningful steps to keep their facilities healthy and safe.

The portal – available at www.SAMforTexas.org – provides free state-based resources. On the site, administrators can:

- **Access resources** to manage asbestos on campus
- **Promote the safety** of students, teachers and staff
- **Ensure compliance** with state and federal asbestos regulations

Required under the Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act (AHERA), school administrators of public and private non-profit schools in Texas must *identify, document* and *manage* asbestos-containing materials in their school. In fact, every public and private non-profit educational agency in Texas must create asbestos management plans for each campus and submit them to the DSHS, *even if no asbestos is present on campus*. Failure to comply with these state regulations may result in fines up to \$5,000.

To protect children from the harmful effects of asbestos exposure, Texas education institutions are urged to begin drafting an asbestos management plan today. As a result, schools, teachers and students can be better protected from asbestos-containing materials. To get started now, visit www.SAMforTexas.org.

This message brought to you by:

