NOTIFICATION OF ASBESTOS IN COUNTY OF VENTURA BUILDINGS

California Health and Safety Code Sections 25915 et seq. require the County to inform employees, vendors, contractors, and others about asbestos-containing materials (ACM) in buildings where they work. Herein find such information. You must: (1) comply with the County policy noted here; and (2) give this notice to all employees and subcontractors working in County buildings. Failure to comply may cause undue risk with your staff and others, immediate contract cancellation, or both.

COUNTY POLICY CONCERNING ASBESTOS IN BUILDINGS

It is County policy that under no circumstances are County employees, vendors, contractors, or others to disturb or attempt removal, repair, or cleanup of known or suspected ACM, unless approved to do so under County contract. However, the whereabouts of all ACM-sites in County buildings are not known. Though many of the buildings are known to have ACM-sites, others are being routinely found by comprehensive building surveys done for various reasons. Because of this uncertainty, and since disturbing ACM can be a hazard, you must contact the County Executive Office Risk Management Department Risk Control Services for advisory guidance before:

(1) Doing any work that might disturb any building material in any County building; or
(2) Assessing any space above ceilings or below floors, or any other space not normally accessed by building occupants.

You are directed to call CEO RMD RCS (805) 654-3197 or email: ***risk.management@ventura.org*** should you have any questions or concerns about the presence of Asbestos before starting any work at any County site. Otherwise the County assumes that you understand and are fully complying with these instructions and policy.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT ASBESTOS

How is asbestos used? Asbestos is usually not used directly, but rather is added as binding material to such diverse materials as plastics, asphalt, cement products, pipe insulation, roofing products, floor tiles, patching compounds, brake linings, and protective clothing. The attributes of ACM are so beneficial that between 1900 and 1980, 40 million tons of asbestos was used in over 3,000 products worldwide. The 1979 consumption rate in the U.S. alone was one million tons. But by 1983, the U.S. rate had fallen 60% and is still dropping today due, in part to laws forbidding asbestos use in many of the materials mentioned. Asbestos usage is restricted but not fully banned in the U.S. and some imported materials may contain Asbestos.

Where is ACM found in buildings? In ones built before 1979 (most but not all ACM use in post 1979 buildings has been banned), ACM is found in a variety of locations. These are typically classified as follows: *surfacing materials* are those which are sprayed or troweled onto building surfaces (acoustical ceilings, fireproofing, etc.); *thermal systems insulation* includes all materials applied to heating, cooling, and plumbing systems; and *miscellaneous materials* includes all other building products. ACM may thus be found anywhere in the building, including spaces above ceilings and below floors, in pipe chases, and building exteriors.

Why is building ACM a problem? Asbestos refers to a family of naturally occurring silicate minerals. When crushed or processed, these minerals separate into long, thin fibers that have unique properties: high strength and flexibility, low thermal and electric conductivity, high absorbency, high chemical**,** and mechanical durability, and is relatively incombustible. It is these properties that make it desirable for commercial applications while at the same time hazardous. Given the right force, ACM can break apart causing the asbestos contained therein to splinter into microscopic fibers that float in the air where they can be easily inhaled or swallowed. These tiny fibers become trapped in body tissues where they can cause health problems.

What are the risks associated with building ACM? Risks allied with *occupational* asbestos exposure (ship building trades, mining and milling, automotive brake repair, etc.) are well known. However, studies indicate that there is typically no appreciable difference in airborne fiber levels between ACM-building air and outdoor air. This suggests that working in a well-maintained ACM-building poses no unusual risk. The mere presence of ACM poses no health threat unless the fibers become airborne by any means. Still, inhaling, or swallowing asbestos fibers can cause a host of health problems, of which the major ones are:

Asbestosis, a lung ailment with emphysema-like symptoms, is caused by chronic exposure to *high* airborne fiber levels, like those which *occupational* asbestos workers were exposed prior to laws regulating exposure. Asbestosis is not expected in persons exposed to *low* levels, or in those exposed for short time periods.

Lung cancer is linked (albeit not exclusively) with intense fiber exposure, particularly in concert with smoking. It is uncertain that asbestos contributes to it at *low* exposure levels, however. Contrarily, mesothelioma cancer seems to be principally caused by asbestos exposure. It accounts for about 10% of deaths in *occupational* asbestos workers but is rare in the general population. They both have, like other forms of cancer, long latency periods, often 15 years plus.

Other health effects include: (1) increased rates of GI tract cancer among some asbestos workers (probably caused by fiber ingestion), and (2) excessive fiber inhalation can cause pleural plaques, a thickening of the lung lining (not cancerous, but is indicative of past exposure).

The prospect of incurring such maladies depends on a combination of exposure level, exposure time, and exposure occurrences (i.e., there is a direct tie between total fiber exposure and risk level). The risk level in County ACM-buildings is deemed no higher than that in the outdoor environment. This is so because the in-place ACM known to the County is in good condition, encapsulated, enclosed or in a restricted area, or of a type not likely to release fibers unless disturbed (e.g., the fibers in vinyl asbestos floor tiles are firmly bound and can be released only if the tile is cut, ground, or sanded).