

## Asbestos Controls for Automotive Repair Shops

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Asbestos is widely used in automotive brake and clutch pads because of its excellent frictional and heat resistant properties. Asbestos fibers, in the form of dust, are released into the air whenever a mechanic works on a brake or clutch assembly. Unless properly controlled, these asbestos fibers present a serious health risk to anyone in the work area.

Asbestos exposure can cause several types of cancer and respiratory diseases, after a twenty year latency period. Because of this long latency period, the danger may not be apparent to those working around asbestos. Nonetheless, medical studies have shown it to be a very serious exposure.

The key in controlling asbestos exposure in automotive shops is to prevent dust generation during brake work. Compressed air should never be used for cleaning. Cleaning with a dry brush or rag, wet brush or rag, garden hose, liquid squirt bottle, solvent spray or ordinary shop-vac are also not recommended since they can also produce dust.

The best available means of controlling the asbestos hazard for repair shop employees is through the proper use of special asbestos control equipment. One type is a High Efficiency Particulate Air (HEPA) Filter Vacuum system which collects asbestos dust from brake and clutch assemblies in a specially designed filter bag.

Another type of system uses a solvent spray to wash the dust from a brake assembly into a catch basin. The asbestos fibers remain in the solution.

For either method of asbestos control to be successful, affected employees must be properly trained. They must first be made aware of the serious health hazards of asbestos dust and shown where it exists in their work environment. They should then be shown how to properly use the asbestos control equipment, following the equipment manufacturer's instruction manuals.

Frequent management follow-up is necessary to assure that safe procedures are being followed, and that the equipment is being maintained in proper working condition.

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