

## Asbestos – Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

*(Related to an anonymous article/petition entitled “Stop Exposure of Students, Staff and Faculty Members to Asbestos in Lakehead Centennial Building” released on or around April 23, 2015)*

### **Question #1:**

*Are students, staff and faculty at Lakehead University (LU) exposed to asbestos?*

### **Answer #1:**

Students, staff and faculty are not expected to be exposed to hazardous concentrations of airborne asbestos fibres when they are at LU performing representative office work or studies.

Asbestos containing building materials (ACM) are present in many homes, offices and schools in Thunder Bay, but this does not in itself mean that the building occupants are exposed to airborne asbestos fibres.

### **Question #2:**

*What are hazardous concentrations of airborne asbestos?*

### **Answer #2:**

Evaluation of the hazard presented by airborne asbestos fibres should be done by comparing the measured airborne concentration to exposure limits and/or guideline values that are based on sound scientific studies and well established risk assessment procedures. The following benchmark values are considered to be reasonable guideline values in the interpretation of air sampling results and measured concentrations in excess of these values can be considered hazardous:

**0.1 fibres per cubic centimetre of air (f/cc)** – Workplace time weighted average (TWA) exposure limit for asbestos, Ontario Regulation (O. Reg.) 490/09 *(Example: The maximum airborne concentration of asbestos fibres that a factory worker making brake shoes out of asbestos can be safely exposed to for an 8 hour day.)*

**0.01 f/cc** – Asbestos enclosure clearance value to be achieved inside an enclosure after Type 3 asbestos work and prior to dismantling the enclosure, O. Reg. 278/05 *(Example: The maximum airborne concentration of asbestos fibres that is considered safe for building occupants following removal of friable ACM under stringent conditions described in O. Reg. 278/05.)*

**0.04 f/cc** – Ambient air quality criterion (AAQC) for asbestos fibres in outdoor air, 24 hour average, Ontario Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MOECC) *(Example: The average outdoor concentration of airborne asbestos fibres that the general public can be expected to be exposed to.)*

**0.0004 to 0.06 f/cc** – The range reported for background concentrations in indoor and outdoor air which is stated in publications, including the Report of the *Ontario Royal Commission on Matters of Health and Safety Arising from the Use of Asbestos in Ontario*, not to represent an increased risk of asbestos health effected for building occupants. *(Example: The range of airborne asbestos fibre concentrations that is considered safe for building occupants.)*

## **Asbestos – Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)**

*(Related to an anonymous article/petition entitled “Stop Exposure of Students, Staff and Faculty Members to Asbestos in Lakehead Centennial Building” released on or around April 23, 2015)*

**Question #3:**

*Does settled dust in the Centennial Building present a hazard when it is disturbed during normal office activities?*

**Answer #3:**

No. Airborne fibre concentrations measured in the Centennial Building of 0.001 f/cc to 0.005 f/cc during normal office activities are not considered to be elevated and fall within the expected indoor and outdoor background ranges noted in answer #2 above.

**Question #4:**

*Is 0.5-1.0 vol% an alarmingly high asbestos concentration?*

**Answer #4:**

No. The Ontario definition of an ACM is a material that contains 0.5% (vol%) or more asbestos (i.e. if a material contains less than 0.5% asbestos it is not considered to be an ACM). The minimum detectable concentration of asbestos in a building material is 0.5% using the method prescribed in O. Reg. 278/05. Building materials can contain up to 100% asbestos.

**Question #5:**

*Did clumps of grey fibrous material fall from the ceiling in the Centennial Building?*

**Answer #5:**

No evidence has shown that grey fibrous material fell from the ceiling. The source of fibrous material observed on horizontal surfaces in the Centennial Building is not known. The word “fallen” was used in reports provided by True Grit Consulting Ltd. (TGCL) to distinguish the fibrous material observed on horizontal surfaces (e.g. in offices) from visually similar fibrous fireproofing known to have been purposely applied to the beams above the metal slat ceiling.

**Question #6:**

*Was the photograph of the fibrous clump in the article taken by TGCL?*

**Answer #6:**

No. TGCL did not take, or provide the caption for, the photograph included in the article.

## Asbestos – Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

*(Related to an anonymous article/petition entitled “Stop Exposure of Students, Staff and Faculty Members to Asbestos in Lakehead Centennial Building” released on or around April 23, 2015)*

**Question #7:**

*Does the age and design of the Centennial Building threaten the health of the staff, students and faculty who use it?*

**Answer #7:**

No (see answer #1 above). LU is in compliance with O. Reg. 278/05 which is the Ontario legislation that is designed to protect occupants and employees in buildings containing ACM from exposure to asbestos.

In Ontario, if a building owner ought reasonably to know that ACM are present in the building (e.g. constructed prior to 1995) then that building owner has defined duties and responsibilities under O. Reg. 278/05. Among those responsibilities is the requirement for an asbestos management plan (AMP). LU has in place an AMP that includes measures and procedures to deal with ACM including, but not limited to, the following:

1. Records of ACM;
2. Regular inspections of ACM;
3. Update records of ACM;
4. Training for maintenance and other employees whose work may disturb ACM;
5. Carry out all work that will disturb ACM using methods described in O. Reg. 278/05.

Additionally, LU’s AMP goes well beyond the requirements of O. Reg. 278/05 in the following areas:

1. LU provides asbestos awareness sessions for building occupants;
2. LU provides comprehensive annual asbestos refresher training for employees whose work may disturb ACM (NOTE: There is no requirement under O. Reg. 278/05 for annual training and refreshers.);
3. LU updates their records of ACM approximately every 3 months (NOTE: This goes beyond the O. Reg. 278/05 requirement for an update every 12 months.);
4. LU removes ACM in each and every repair or renovation where possible (NOTE: There is no requirement under O. Reg. 278/05 to remove ACM from buildings.); and
5. LU cleaned CB4009 (the entire office and contents including areas that were found to be free of ACM) after fibrous material in that office was found to contain asbestos.

*This FAQ document was produced by True Grit Consulting Ltd. in cooperation with LU Physical Plant. The information contained in this document is meant for guidance purposes only. It is not intended as a substitute for professional consultation and advice in any particular matter. Do not assume that all acceptable safety measures are contained in this document.*