

## **Vinyl Asbestos Tiles**

Byron A. Ellis – August 26, 2017

Vinyl asbestos tile (VAT) contains asbestos. Therefore, they must be maintained in good condition to prevent airborne asbestos particles and should be labelled as asbestos containing materials (ACM). VATs are non-friable. However, the frictional forces exerted during routine floor-care can loosen the asbestos fibers and cause them to become airborne.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) in [1910.1001\(k\)\(7\)](#) prohibits sanding of asbestos floor, stripping of finishes shall be conducted using low abrasion pads at speeds lower than 300 rpm and wet methods, perform burnishing or dry buffing only on asbestos-containing flooring which has sufficient finish so that the pad cannot contact the asbestos-containing material. Additionally, waste, debris and accompanying dust in areas containing ACM and/or presumed asbestos containing materials (PACM) or visibly deteriorated ACM, shall not be dusted or swept dry, or vacuumed without using a high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filter. Both OSHA Standards 1910.1001 and 1926.1101 addresses asbestos floor tile cleaning activities.

Stripping or buffing of asbestos-containing flooring material usually comes under the scope of the General Industry Asbestos Standard. If, however, a construction company does it as part of the completion of a construction project, it comes under the scope of the Construction Asbestos Standard.

EPA recommends minimizing floor stripping of asbestos containing floors. Staff used to strip floors should be properly trained to safely use personal protective equipment and to operate machines, pads, and floor care chemicals used at the facility and follow appropriate work practices, such as:

1. Strip Floors While Wet.
2. Run Machine at Slow Speed.
3. Do Not Over-Strip Floors.
4. Do Not Sand Asbestos-Containing Flooring Material.

Purchase a floor finish stripper that is appropriate for your floor with a "Green Seal" (USA) certified. Test the stripper on a part of the floor that is not readily visible before starting the job. Some older linoleum floors cannot withstand stripping and the color may bleed. For best results, use a floor finish stripper that is the same brand as the floor wax you typically use. Apply sealer (generally 2 coats) and floor finish (generally 3 coats) as soon as the floor dries to provide a protective coat. Apply wax sparingly to avoid future wax buildups.

Encapsulation or sealing of asbestos tiles can also be accomplished by sealant or two-part epoxy process.

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