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Construction Research
and Training

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AFL-CIO

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Medical Center

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Savannah River Site

Shippingport

Waste Isolation Pilot Plant

Weldon Spring

Yucca Mountain

Building Trades National Medical Screening Program

P.O. Box 900960 ▪ Seattle, WA 98109 ▪ 1-800-866-9663

ASBESTOS

What is asbestos?

Asbestos is a mineral fiber valued for its strength and fireproofing properties. It has been used in thousands of products, including building and equipment insulation.

Asbestos was phased out in 1970s and 1980s, but construction workers can still be exposed to high amounts of asbestos, especially during building demolition and renovation.

Asbestos fibers are so fine that you cannot see them. You can breathe in the fibers without feeling them. The lungs cannot easily push the tiny fibers back out.

The trapped asbestos fibers can scar the lungs and make them stiff and rigid, a condition called *asbestosis*. The fibers can work their way out to the lining of the lungs and thicken it, a condition called *pleural plaques*. Asbestos also causes lung cancer and *mesothelioma*. Mesothelioma is a cancer of the lining of the lungs or abdomen.

What is the purpose of this exam?

Your screening interview showed that you may have been exposed to asbestos at work. If you were exposed, it is important to monitor your health, especially your lungs. Checking your health will help us decide whether you need treatment or more tests.

What are we looking for?

We are looking for signs of scarring of the lungs or lung linings due to asbestos. The first symptom of asbestosis (lung scarring) is usually shortness of breath. The symptoms are usually worst in workers who breathed in very large amount of asbestos fibers over many years.

We will check your lung function using an instrument called a *spirometer*.

We will take a chest x-ray to look for lung scarring and pleural plaques. Your chest x-ray may be normal or it may show possible lung scarring or pleural plaques. Having pleural plaques does not mean you have lung cancer or asbestosis, but it does confirm that you have been exposed to asbestos.

You will receive a letter summarizing your exam and photocopies of your test results. All your results are confidential, as defined in your Consent Statement. Building Trades National Medical Screening Program

What if my test results are positive?

If these results show possible lung problems, you will be referred to your doctor or a specialist. To be sure whether or not you have asbestosis, you may need some follow-up breathing tests or a CT scan of your chest.

What other steps should I take?

Avoid breathing in any dust, chemical, or other substance that could hurt your lungs. If you have been given a respirator at work, wear it!

Contact your doctor if you get a long-lasting cough or shortness of breath.

What if I have more questions?

If you have questions after this exam, ask your personal physician. Or call our toll-free number at 1-800-866-9663. We will refer you to a professional who can answer your questions.