

On December 14, 2011, Arthur A. Elkins, Jr., the Inspector General of the EPA, issued an Early Warning Report concerning the use of unapproved and potentially unsafe asbestos demolition methods. The EPA itself had been using a quicker and less expensive method for asbestos removal than was allowed in its own rules. By cutting corners, it created a health risk to agency workers and the general public. Even small levels of exposure to asbestos have been shown to cause malignant mesothelioma, a devastating cancer, in humans. A person who develops mesothelioma typically is not diagnosed with the disease until decades after the person's first exposure to asbestos.

A 1973 EPA rule requires that asbestos must be removed by trained workers using protective gear and taking specific precautions to prevent asbestos fibers from being released into the environment. However, in 1999, the EPA began looking into alternative asbestos removal methods to save time and money. The cheaper removal methods were used in different locations, including in the states of Texas, Arkansas and Washington. The December 14, 2011 memo concludes that these cheaper removal methods are unsafe and orders that going forward, only removal methods that conform to the 1973 safety rules should be used.

Public Justice, a public interest law firm, and the Natural Resources Defense Council, an environmental group, were instrumental in exposing the unsafe asbestos removal methods.

Click [here](#) for an article with more information.

Click [here](#) to read the EPA Early Warning Report in its entirety.