

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) was established in 1970. The EPA's role is to set and enforce standards to ensure environmental protection. Its website states the agency's mission: "Since its inception, EPA has been working for a cleaner, healthier environment for the American people." <https://www.epa.gov/history>

Asbestos was one of the first pollutants identified as hazardous by the EPA. Since 1970, the EPA has taken steps to protect workers and the general public from the hazards of asbestos. The steps have included banning certain (but not all) asbestos products and setting regulations for the safe handling of asbestos existing in schools and workplaces. The EPA also banned any new uses of asbestos in this country.

Most industrialized nations in the world have completely banned asbestos for all uses, but the United States has not. In 2016, President Obama signed a bill passed by Congress that would give the EPA authority to finally ban asbestos for all uses in the US. However, in a June 1, 2018 publication, the EPA announced that it would not ban asbestos. Even more surprising, the agency has proposed a framework to **allow new uses of asbestos**, as well as relax regulations on other hazardous chemicals.

Under the EPA's new proposal, it will no longer consider asbestos remaining from certain uses, including in buildings, as a possible source of contamination. This ignores the hazard of millions of tons of asbestos in schools, hospitals and homes. Vulnerable populations, such as young children, will be especially at risk for possibly developing asbestos diseases such as malignant mesothelioma, in the future.

Many believe these changes go against the very nature of the Environmental Protection Agency. Senator Edward Merkley stated that "by moving to ignore the health concerns of disposal and past uses of asbestos and other dangerous chemicals, the EPA is flagrantly disregarding the fact that it is statutorily required to look at the full lifecycle of these chemicals, from manufacture to disposal."