

Naturally Occurring Asbestos (in progress)

DTSC is working in various areas of California to address concerns about potential effects of naturally occurring asbestos (NOA). Asbestiform minerals occur in rock and soil as the result of natural geologic processes, often in veins near earthquake faults in the coastal ranges and the foothills of the Sierra Nevada, as well as in other areas of the country.

NOA can take the form of long, thin, separable fibers. Natural weathering or human disturbance can break NOA down to microscopic fibers, easily suspended in air.

There is no health threat if asbestos fibers in soil remain undisturbed and do not become airborne. But when inhaled, these thin fibers irritate tissues and resist the body's natural defenses. Asbestos, a known carcinogen, causes cancers of the lung and the lining of internal organs, as well as asbestosis and other diseases that inhibit lung function. Asbestos fibers may be released into the air as a result of activities that disturb NOA-containing rock or soils. Asbestos minerals can fragment into small fibers that readily suspend in air and may be visible only under a microscope. Inhalation of these small fibers may result in an increased risk of respiratory disease or cancer in exposed individuals.

- [Geologic Occurrences of Asbestos in California](#)
- [Health Effects of NOA](#)
- [NOA Studies](#)
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