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ASTM E2356-26 Updates Asbestos Survey Requirements: What Restorers Should Know

What restorers and property owners need to know before restoration, renovation, and demolition

[Tomo Taniuchi](#)

September 21, 2026

ASTM International recently released ASTM E2356-26, the 2026 revision of the industry consensus standard for comprehensive building [asbestos surveys](#), replacing ASTM E2356-18. The revised standard strengthens expectations for planning, conducting, and documenting asbestos surveys while expanding the range of building areas inspectors must evaluate.

The update comes at a time of continued regulatory scrutiny and reinforces a longstanding requirement under the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's National Emission Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants (NESHAP): property owners and project teams must complete asbestos inspections before beginning renovation or demolition.

Although asbestos regulations themselves are not new, the revised standard clarifies how inspectors should perform surveys and raises expectations for survey quality.

Expanded Scope of Inspections

ASTM E2356-26 broadens the definition of the spaces inspectors must examine. Previous versions primarily focused on regularly occupied areas, such as offices, classrooms, and residential interiors. The updated standard now explicitly requires inspectors to evaluate areas that people do not regularly occupy, including attics, plenums, and mechanical spaces, whenever renovation activities are likely to disturb them.

This change closes a longstanding gap and reflects the realities of renovation and demolition projects, where overlooked spaces often contain regulated asbestos-containing materials.

The revised standard also places greater emphasis on documentation, improving consistency across projects and making survey findings more traceable and defensible.

Beyond improving consistency and documentation, comprehensive asbestos surveys protect workers, building occupants, and the public from unintended asbestos exposure. By identifying asbestos-containing materials before renovation or demolition begins, project teams can properly manage hazards and reduce the potential for airborne asbestos fiber release. While regulatory compliance, project costs, and project schedules remain important considerations, protecting human health continues to serve as the primary objective.

Alignment with Federal Requirements

Although ASTM E2356-26 serves as an industry consensus standard rather than a regulation, it closely aligns with enforceable federal requirements under:

- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) NESHAP (40 CFR Part 61, Subpart M)
- Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) asbestos standards for construction and general industry

Under NESHAP, property owners and project teams must complete asbestos inspections before renovating or demolishing regulated structures, including:

- Commercial, industrial, and institutional buildings
- Residential buildings with five or more units
- Structures with load-bearing elements, such as towers and industrial facilities

Project owners must submit notification at least ten working days before work begins whenever asbestos-containing material exceeds 160 square feet, 260 linear feet, or 35 cubic feet.

Failure to comply can trigger regulatory enforcement actions, civil penalties, and project delays that may extend one to three months while significantly increasing overall project costs.

Why the Standard Matters

Federal regulations require asbestos inspections, but they do not always explain how inspectors should conduct them. ASTM E2356-26 fills that gap by standardizing survey methodologies and promoting consistency across inspectors and projects.

Without a clear standard, inspectors can produce survey results that vary significantly in quality and completeness. The updated ASTM framework reduces that variability while supporting more reliable project planning and regulatory compliance.

ASTM E2356-26 complements related standards by defining three primary survey types:

- **Baseline Survey:** Identifies all asbestos-containing materials within a structure.
- **Project Design Survey:** Supports planning for renovation or demolition.
- **Pre-Construction Survey:** Confirms site conditions immediately before construction begins.
- The updated standard applies to each survey type and further refines expectations for execution.

Financial and Legal Implications

Incomplete or inadequate asbestos surveys increase the risk of unrecognized asbestos exposure for workers, building occupants, and the public. They can also trigger regulatory enforcement actions, civil penalties, project shutdowns, and costly remediation efforts. When organizations knowingly violate asbestos regulations or engage in willful misconduct, prosecutors can also pursue criminal charges.



In many cases, organizations spend relatively little on comprehensive asbestos surveys compared to the substantial financial exposure associated with noncompliance. Penalties, project delays, and corrective actions can collectively drive costs into the hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Enforcement trends also show that incomplete or inadequate inspections performed early in a project often lead to regulatory violations later.

What to Do Now

With ASTM E2356-26 now in effect, property owners, developers, and contractors should verify that every asbestos survey complies with the updated standard. They should pay particular attention to areas that previous inspections may have overlooked, including attics, crawlspaces, and mechanical systems.

By conducting comprehensive, well-documented asbestos surveys that align with current standards, project teams can protect human health, reduce project risk, maintain regulatory compliance, and keep projects on schedule.



Tomo Taniuchi is a Certified Industrial Hygienist with SCS Engineers in Las Vegas/Henderson, Nevada, holding multiple professional credentials including CIH, CSP, NRPP Radon Measurement Professional, CDPH Lead I/A, and CA CAC. He specializes in evaluating and managing environmental and occupational health hazards, with a particular focus on asbestos, lead, and radon in complex building and infrastructure environments. ttaniuchi@scsengineers.com, (725) 269-0080.

