Introduction
The term asbestos describes six naturally occurring fibrous minerals found in certain types of rock formations. Asbestos became a popular commercial product because it is strong, won’t burn, resists corrosion, and insulates well. Intact and undisturbed, asbestos materials do not pose a health risk; however, asbestos materials can become hazardous when, due to damage, disturbance, or deterioration over time, they release fibers into the air. If inhaled, these fibers can cause diseases which disrupt the normal functioning of the lungs.

Employer Responsibilities
OSHA regulations state that, “The employer shall institute a training program for all employees who are exposed to airborne concentrations of asbestos at or above the PEL and/or excursion limit and ensure their protection in the program. Training shall be provided prior to or at the time of initial assignment and at least annually thereafter. The training program shall be conducted in a manner which the employee is able to understand.”

OSHA's asbestos standard for general industry at 29 CFR 1910.1001(j)(7)(iv) requires employers to provide an asbestos awareness training course for employees who perform housekeeping operations in areas where an asbestos-containing material (ACM) or presumed asbestos-containing material (PACM) is present. The elements of the course must include the health effects of asbestos; locations, signs of damage and deterioration of ACM and PACM; the proper response to fiber release episodes; and the standard's requirements related to housekeeping. This training must be held annually and conducted so that all employees understand it.

Competent Person
“Competent Person” requirements — On all construction sites with asbestos operations, employers must name a “competent person,” qualified and authorized to ensure worker safety and health. The competent person must attend a comprehensive training course certified by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) or a state-approved training provider or a course that is equivalent in length and content. Under these requirements for safety and health prevention programs, the competent person must inspect Class I job sites at least once during each work shift and upon employee request. The competent person must inspect Class II and Class III job sites often enough to assess changing conditions and upon employee request.
Hazards
Asbestos workers have increased chances of getting two principal types of cancer: cancer of the lung tissue itself and mesothelioma, a cancer of the thin membrane that surrounds the lung and other internal organs. These diseases do not develop immediately, but appear only after a number of years.

Regulated Area
A regulated area is a marked site where employees work with asbestos. It includes any adjoining area(s) where debris and waste from asbestos work accumulates or where airborne concentrations of asbestos exceed or can exceed the PEL. All Class I, II, and III asbestos work must be done within regulated areas. Employers must mark the regulated area in any manner that minimizes the number of persons within the area and protects persons outside the area from exposure to airborne asbestos.

Posting Requirements
Posted warning signs marking the regulated area must be easy to read. An employer performing work in a regulated area must inform other employers on site of the nature of the work being done, regulated area requirements, and measures taken to protect on-site employees.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
Respirators: All personnel are required to wear an approved respirator when performing tasks that result in asbestos exposure that exceeds the permissible exposure limit (PEL). Use a specific respirator designed specifically for working with asbestos. Wear a half-face filter respirator fitted with a class P1 or P2 filter cartridge, or a class P1 or P2 disposable respirator appropriate for asbestos. Disposable respirators or dust masks are not permitted for asbestos work. Keep your respirator on until all work and clean up is done and your contaminated clothing is removed, bagged and sealed. Disposable Protective Clothing: Required in work areas where asbestos fiber concentrations exceed the permissible exposure limit (PEL).

Disposal Procedures and Cleanup
Wastes that are generated by processes where asbestos is present include empty asbestos shipping containers; process wastes such as cuttings, trimmings, or reject materials; housekeeping waste from wet-sweeping or HEPA-vacuuming; asbestos fireproofing, insulating material, or other building products removed during building renovation or demolition; and contaminated protective clothing.

Conclusion
Asbestos is a respiratory hazard when proper safety measures are not implemented. All personnel must be trained and safety requirements must be adhered to. The OSHA regulations on asbestos are extensive and cannot possibly be comprehensively covered in this tailgate. If one works in demolition and renovation where asbestos is encountered on a regular basis, it is prudent to follow the OSHA regulations as they will help you maintain safe asbestos handling operations.