

Nicolet or Nicolite?

Nicolet or "Nicolite" roofing paper is a building material that was most commonly used as an underlayment for cedar shake roofing. Unlike a water resistant (black or dark brown) tar paper used under asphalt roofing, Nicolet paper was used under cedar shake roofing as a fire resistant barrier and is generally white, light gray, or can discolor to a light tan over time. It commonly contains a relatively high concentration of asbestos and does not contain the tar component that other roofing felt papers have.



The relatively high concentration of asbestos and lack of tar makes the material fire resistant. The lack of tar, however, means the material is friable because it does not have that tar component to bind the material, and the fibers within it, together.

Nicolet paper is commonly known as being a friable material throughout the industry. It is also important to note that the definition of "Friable Asbestos-Containing Material" within Spokane Regional Clean Air Agency (SRCAA), Regulation I, Article IX, Section 9.02.O includes Nicolet roofing paper. The definition reads:

Friable Asbestos-Containing Material is asbestos-containing material that, when dry, can be crumbled, pulverized, or reduced to powder by hand pressure or by the forces expected to act upon the material in the course of demolition, renovation, or disposal. Each of these descriptions is separate and distinct, meaning the term includes asbestos-containing material that, when dry, can be:

1. Crumbled by hand pressure or by the forces expected to act upon the material in the course of renovation, demolition, or disposal;
2. Pulverized by hand pressure or by the forces expected to act upon the material in the course of renovation, demolition, or disposal; or
3. Reduced to powder by hand pressure or by the forces expected to act upon the material in the course of renovation, demolition, or disposal).

Such materials include, but are not limited to, thermal system insulation, surfacing material, Nicolet roofing paper, and cement asbestos products.

What has become widely known as Nicolet or "Nicolite" Paper was produced, in large part, by The Nicolet Company in Ambler Pennsylvania. Ambler, an asbestos industry centric community since the 1880's, would eventually become a superfund site. After a century of unregulated disposal of asbestos containing waste, the "White Mountains" of Ambler underwent remediation.

The misnomer "Nicolite" may have come about due to a partial transposition of other common asbestos terms such as vermiculite, Zonolite, actinolite, tremolite, etc.

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