

ASBESTOS RISK MANAGEMENT

ASBESTOS IDENTIFICATION

When carrying out construction work, it is possible that asbestos may be found in the workplace or in materials being used at the workplace, namely:

- Asbestos cement products – roof and wall cladding, bath panels, boiler and incinerator flues, gutters, rainwater pipes and water tank.
- Textiles – asbestos felts, ropes, fire blankets and woven asbestos cable sheathing.
- Sprayed insulation materials used for fireproofing, thermal protection, insulation and soundproofing.
- Lagging and other loosely bound insulation materials used in a wide range of electrical, thermal and acoustic applications.
- Sprayed (impet) asbestos on structural beams and girders.
- Lagging on pipework, boilers, calorifiers and heat exchangers.
- Asbestos insulating board – ceiling tiles, partition walls, service duct covers, fire breaks, heater cupboards, door panels, lift shaft lining, fire surrounds and soffits.

ASBESTOS MANAGEMENT PLAN

In accordance with WHS Regulations, a person with management or control of a workplace must ensure a written Asbestos Management Plan (AMP) is prepared for the workplace if asbestos or Asbestos Containing Material (ACM) has been identified. An AMP must include:

- Identification of asbestos and ACM – Asbestos Register, site-specific locations with warning signs and labels.
- Safe Work Method Statement (SWMS) procedures and control measures.
- Asbestos emergency procedures.
- Worker consultation, information and training.
- Identification of each person with responsibilities under the AMP.
- Air monitoring procedures.

Prior to carrying out any work at a workplace, the person with management or control of a workplace must review the workplace Asbestos Register, provide a copy of the Asbestos Register to the person who is carrying out the demolition or refurbishment work, and identify any asbestos that may be disturbed and remove it, so far as is reasonably practicable.



**DANGER
ASBESTOS**



ASBESTOS TRAINING

A Person Conducting a Business or Undertaking (PCBU) must ensure workers who they reasonably believe may be involved in asbestos removal work in the workplace or the carrying out of asbestos-related work are trained in the identification, safe handling and suitable control measures for asbestos and ACM. A PCBU must ensure that asbestos and ACM information, training and instruction provided to a worker is suitable and adequate and must include the following:

- Asbestos associated health risks.
- Asbestos identification and likely presence of asbestos in the workplace.
- PCBUs and the worker's roles and responsibilities under the AMP.
- Where the Asbestos Register is located, how it can be accessed and how to understand the information contained in it.
- Processes and safe work procedures to be followed to prevent exposure, including exposure from any accidental release of airborne asbestos.
- Where applicable, the correct use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), including Respiratory Protective Equipment (RPE).
- The implementation of control measures and safe work methods to eliminate or minimise the risks associated with asbestos, in return limiting the exposure to workers and other persons.
- Exposure standard and control levels for asbestos.
- Purpose of any exposure monitoring or health monitoring that may occur.

This training is more general than the training that a worker undertaking asbestos removal work would receive. Workers who are undertaking licensed asbestos removal work are required to complete specific units of competency. Records of all training must be kept for five years after the asbestos removal is completed. These records must also be available for inspection by the regulator.

SAFE WORKING METHODS

Prior to any work commencing, a risk assessment should be carried out in consultation with employees. A safe work procedure should then be devised that minimises the release of dust and fibres and avoids exposure. Work involving friable asbestos is considered to present the greatest risk of exposure to airborne fibres. Bonded asbestos is unlikely to release airborne fibres unless it is damaged or disturbed. Specific safety precautions for work involving asbestos are:

- Wear protective clothing and an approved respirator. Disposable coveralls are recommended.
- Use non-powered hand tools as these generate less dust. Do not use sanders on asbestos-cement products.
- If possible, wet down material to reduce the release of dust or use vacuum attachments fitted with High Efficiency Particulate Air (HEPA) filters.
- Work in well-ventilated areas if possible.
- Use drop sheets to collect debris.
- Dispose of smaller asbestos pieces and collected dust in plastic bags, which are clearly labelled 'asbestos waste'.



REMOVAL OF ASBESTOS

There are additional responsibilities related to the removal and disposal of asbestos, which are detailed in the *Safe Work Australia Code of Practice: How to Safely Remove Asbestos, 2011* in relation to competency and licensing requirements.

A PCBU who commissions the removal of asbestos at the workplace must ensure asbestos removal work is carried out only by a licensed asbestos removalist who is appropriately licensed to carry out the work, unless specified in the WHS Regulations that a licence is not required.

There are two types of licences: Class A and Class B. The type of licence required will depend on the type and quantity of asbestos or ACM that is being removed at a workplace. Removal of asbestos by a person who does not hold a Class A or Class B asbestos removal licence is permitted if the asbestos being removed is:

- 10 square metres or less of non-friable asbestos.
- ACM that is not more than a minor contamination and is associated with the removal of 10 square metres or less of non-friable asbestos.

Friable asbestos materials must not be removed by a person who does not have a Class A asbestos licence. The following safety measures are required:

- For external work, close all windows and doors on the building.
- Use warning signs and barriers when removing asbestos-cement materials.
- If practical, seal asbestos-cement sheets with Polyvinyl Acetate (PVA) paint or wet with water.
- Wear coveralls and an approved respirator.
- Wet clean gutters and collect material for waste disposal.
- Remove asbestos sheets with minimal breakage and lower asbestos sheets to the ground. Do not drop them.
- Stack removed asbestos sheets on polythene sheeting, then wrap and seal for disposal.
- Do not leave asbestos sheets on site where they may break or be crushed.
- Do not skid or drag asbestos sheets over other sheets – this can release asbestos fibres.
- Clean asbestos-cement residues with an approved vacuum cleaner.
- Keep waste containing asbestos wet or wrapped in polythene and remove from site as soon as practical.
- Place used disposable coveralls, masks and filters with other asbestos waste in bags for removal.

WASTE HANDLING AND DISPOSAL

Asbestos waste must be disposed of as soon as is practicable at a licensed asbestos disposal site. The Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) and local governments regulate licensed asbestos disposal sites, and the transport of commercial asbestos waste. It is the final point at which the exposure to risks associated with asbestos is likely to occur. All waste containing asbestos must be:

- Kept damp (to prevent excess runoff water).
- Collected, labelled and sealed using plastic or leak-proof containers.
- Stored at a secure site in labelled, lined bins or a leak-proof container.
- Removed from the site as soon as practicable and/or collected and stored in a manner approved by the EPA or an appropriate disposal authority.
- Transported in a covered leak-proof vehicle or a manner approved by the EPA.
- Disposed of in a manner and at a site approved by the EPA or an appropriate disposal authority.
- Vehicles must be cleaned before leaving the landfill site.



PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE) AND RESPIRATORY PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (RPE)

Proper PPE, such as respirators, is essential when working in asbestos environments. Employers should provide sufficient and clean protective clothing and respirators to workers prior to any work, which involves exposure to asbestos.

All workers engaged in asbestos removal work must wear RPE conforming to the requirements of **AS/NZS 1716:2012 Respiratory Protective Devices** or its equivalent. The selection of suitable RPE depends on the nature of the asbestos removal work, the probable maximum concentrations of asbestos fibres expected and any personal characteristics of the wearer that may affect the facial fit of the respirator.

A PPE Program must be included in the employer's WHS Management Plan. It is important to know how to use the equipment properly, for example, how to check that it fits, when to wear it, and how to keep it clean and free from asbestos dust.

Personal protective clothing given to asbestos workers should include coveralls, head coverings, over boots and gloves. Other things to consider when choosing PPE include:

- Disposable coveralls – a polyester/cotton mix may prove more suitable in a warm environment.
- Reusable protective clothing – after use, clothing must be vacuumed, placed in approved 'asbestos' bags, and taken to an industrial laundry with facilities for asbestos decontamination.
- Dusty protective clothing can spread asbestos. Employees should not try to clean dust off by beating it with hands or using a brush or air-hose to blow it away. An industrial vacuum cleaner can help remove dust from protective clothes.
- Asbestos workers must not take work clothes home so as to ensure family members are not exposed to asbestos dust from clothing.
- Workers should not wash protective clothing themselves. This clothing requires special laundering to ensure asbestos decontamination.
- Employers should provide a clean area for employees to change and store their own clothes separate from the place for storing protective clothing.
- Showers and washbasins must be provided for workers to wash before putting on their own clothes to go home.

PERSONAL HYGIENE

Workers should not eat or drink in an area that may be contaminated with asbestos dust. A rest area away from the work area should be provided. Workers should go there for meal breaks and remember to wash their hands and face before eating, drinking or smoking. The rest area should be kept clean by not wearing protective clothing from the asbestos area.