

TIP sheet

Asbestos

T017 – DECEMBER 2007



Background

Asbestos installation has been prohibited in Australia since December 2003. In situ asbestos containing materials (ACM), must be appropriately managed to ensure the risks of exposure to airborne asbestos fibres are eliminated or minimised.

Minimum requirements

A WorkCover NSW asbestos license is required for all bonded asbestos activities where greater than 200m² is being handled (this figure will reduce to 10m² on 1 January 2008). A license is required when friable asbestos activities will take longer than 1 hour.

Managers and Supervisors must implement measures to control and/or minimise the health and safety risks associated with ACM in the workplace. RTA worksites shall:

- Investigate the premises and identify the presence or possible presence of ACM.
- Develop and maintain a register of ACM, including details concerning locations, accessibility, condition, risk assessments and control measures.
- Arrange for a licensed removalist to remove any ACM that poses a risk to health and safety.
- Where ACM exists, develop, implement and maintain an asbestos management plan.

- Assess the condition of any ACM that is found and the associated risks.
- Implement control measures as soon as possible and maintain them as long as ACM remains in the workplace.
- Develop written Safe Work Method Statements (SWMS) for all tasks involving ACM.
- Ensure that all staff and contractors who potentially may interact with ACM are trained and inducted in the nature of the hazards involved, the means adopted to control exposure and emergency procedures in place.
- Carry out and record appropriate medical surveillance on staff that may be at risk of health effects arising from possible exposure to ACM at work.

Risk assessment

A Risk Assessment must be completed by a technically competent person prior to any work associated with ACM. The Risk Assessment of ACM shall comply with the RTA OHS Risk Management procedure.

The Risk Assessment for ACM should consider:

- The condition of the ACM eg. is it friable, bonded, liable to damage or deterioration.
- The likelihood of exposure.
- The location of any other works near by that may disturb the ACM.

- The work methods used.
- Any existing barriers eg walls, doors.

The purpose of a Risk Assessment is to determine and implement appropriate control measures, induction and training, monitoring and health surveillance.

Risk controls

The exposure of employees and other persons to asbestos should be eliminated where practicable. If this is not possible, it should be kept as low as reasonably practical, and in all other circumstances it should be kept below the National Exposure Standard (NES).

Using more than one of the following controls in combination is usually necessary:

Licensed and Accredited Providers

To ensure that this hazardous material is handled and disposed of in the appropriate manner, the RTA will only engage WorkCover NSW licensed and accredited providers to undertake activities involving asbestos above the thresholds detailed above.

Wet spray method of removal

The ACM should be saturated through its full depth and maintained in a wet condition. In many instances it is helpful if a wetting agent (surfactant), such as detergent, is added to the

water, as this facilitates more rapid wetting of the ACM.

A manually controlled, consistent low pressure, coarse spray, such as from an adjustable pistol-grip garden hose, is recommended for this purpose. The design of the spraying equipment will depend on the availability of a water supply and access to the area to be sprayed.

With this method, a water spray should be applied in a manner that ensures that the entire surface of the ACM is saturated but minimises runoff. While the water spray should be copious, it should not be so forceful that the water droplets generate dust when they hit the surface of the ACM.

When cutting equipment is being used to remove an ACM that is friable, the water spray should be directed at the site of the cut and the wetted material should be removed as the cut progresses.

The wetted ACM should be removed in sections, immediately placed in suitably labelled asbestos waste containers and properly sealed (see section 9.10). Any small sections that might be dislodged should be collected and properly disposed of as asbestos waste.

Disposal of asbestos waste

All asbestos waste should be removed from the workplace by a competent person and transported and disposed of in accordance with all relevant NSW legislation and guidelines for the transport and disposal of asbestos waste.

Further information on the transport and disposal of asbestos waste, including licensing requirements and designated asbestos waste dumps, may be obtained from local councils or the relevant environmental protection authority or waste disposal authority.

Exposure Standards

The NES in NSW for Amosite (brown asbestos) and Crocidolite (blue asbestos) is 0.1 fibres/ml of air. The NES for Chrysotile (white asbestos) is 0.5 fibres/ml of air. This should be measured using the Membrane Filter Method (MFM) by an Occupational Hygienist.

Monitoring of airborne concentrations should be undertaken during any ACM removal process.

Health Surveillance and Monitoring

Health surveillance for asbestos should be determined by a risk assessment of the potential for exposure to asbestos.

The Risk Assessment may identify the need for ongoing or periodic atmospheric monitoring of the workplace. Ref: NOHSC 1005(1994) NOHSC 7039 (1995).

Air monitoring must be completed by a competent person, usually a qualified Occupational Hygienist and in accordance with NOHSC 3003(2005) and depends on the risk assessment.

Competency Based Training

Employees working on or in the vicinity of ACM must be trained in ways to control exposure to asbestos. Training is to be recorded and include:

- Identification and signage of areas where ACM is known to exist.
- Systems of work, ventilation and other 'control' devices and their use.
- PPE use, care, maintenance and storage.
- Refresher training every year.
- An asbestos removal license is required for persons involved in the removal of ACM.
- Licensed persons in NSW shall strictly follow the NOHSC Code of Practice for safe removal of asbestos.
- Contact Learning and Development Section for details of accredited courses.

Safety and Security

Responsibilities for the security and safety of the asbestos removal site and asbestos work area should be specified in the asbestos removal control plan.

Where security and emergency arrangements are not developed specifically for the asbestos removal job, site-specific security and emergency plans should be provided prior to commencement of the works.

All identified (or presumed) ACM should be clearly labelled.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

When ACM is identified the range and level of PPE that may be required should be established in accordance with the level of risk.

The minimum respiratory equipment for inspection of ACM is a class P2 half face respirator. Disposable coveralls with fitted hoods and cuffs should always be worn.

Laced boots should be avoided; gum boots are easier to clean. Boot covers should be worn where necessary.

Decontamination

The type of decontamination required depends on the type of asbestos; the work method used and the site conditions.

At the end of asbestos work, all tools used should be dismantled (when possible) and decontaminated by wet wiping. They should be placed in sealed containers and used only for asbestos work; or disposed of as asbestos waste.

Asbestos vacuum cleaners should comply with AS 3544(1988) and AS 4260 (1997). Household vacuum cleansers must never be used, even if they are used with a HEPA filter attachment.

All asbestos contaminated equipment and tools should be clearly labelled with an appropriate warning statement.

Appropriately marked asbestos waste disposable bags should always be available. Wet wipe the external surface of the asbestos waste bags before they are removed from the restricted asbestos work area.

Clearance to re-occupy an asbestos work area should be monitored and administered by a competent person.

For Personal Decontamination:

- Remove all visible dust from overalls by wet wiping or with an approved vacuum cleaner with HEPA filter.
- While still wearing respirator, remove disposable overalls. Place in asbestos waste bag and dispose of as asbestos waste.
- Clothing and footwear used during work should be vacuumed and footwear wet wiped.

Emergency plan

A site-specific emergency plan, reflecting the risks involved, should be developed before any asbestos removal work commences.

Workers should be trained for emergency situations. Decontamination procedures can be temporarily waived in the event of an emergency.

References

[OHS Act 2000](#) & [OHS Regulation 2001](#) Chap, 4, 6, 8, 10, 11, 12

[WorkCover COP](#) – Control of Workplace Hazardous Substances

[NOHSC: 2002\(2005\) COP](#) – Safe Removal of Asbestos

[NOHSC: 2018 \(2005\) COP](#) – Management and Control of Asbestos in workplaces

[RTA OHS Policy 2.0](#) – OHS Risk Management

[RTA OHS Policy 2.13](#) – Hazardous Substances

[RTA OHS Policy 4.0](#) – Personal Protective Equipment