



Department of Housing and Works
Government of Western Australia

Asbestos Management

Information Guide For Agencies

**Last Updated
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Foreword

Under the occupational Safety and Health Act and Regulations 1996, agencies have a statutory obligation to maintain a safe work place for employees and a duty of care to the community who use Government facilities.

To honor the Government's obligation and commitment, the Minister for Housing and Works established the Asbestos Steering Committee (ASC), an interdepartmental task force, to develop a whole of government approach to the management of asbestos in buildings and facilities owned or leased by Government.

This Information Guide has been developed in consultation with the ASC to provide information to agencies with buildings where asbestos containing materials (ACM) are present.

The asbestos management practices outlined in this guide are based on the *Code of Practice for the Management and Control of Asbestos in Workplaces [NOHSC: 2018 (2005)]* and *Code of Practice for the Safe Removal of Asbestos 2nd Edition [NOHSC: 2002(2005)]*.

Introduction

What Is Asbestos?

Asbestos is defined as a group of fibrous silicate minerals belonging to the amphibole or serpentine group of minerals. The most common types used in manufactured items are amosite (brown asbestos), crocidolite (blue asbestos), and chrysotile (white asbestos). Fibrous minerals, including asbestiform types are quite common within the earth's crust, however; quantities suitable for commercial extraction are rare.

How Asbestos Has Been Used

Physical and chemical properties of asbestos materials have resulted in a wide range of applications particularly for thermal and acoustic insulation, filtration, and as a binder mixed with cement, rubber or vinyl to make building materials. Some of these materials include fireproofing, boiler lagging, vinyl flooring, gaskets, asbestos cement sheeting and moulded products.

Asbestos Cement (AC) materials were manufactured in Western Australia from 1921 to 1987. Prior to 1955, chrysotile and amosite were the main asbestos types used. Between 1955 and 1966, crocidolite was also used. The use of crocidolite in AC products ceased in about 1966. Most uses of amosite ceased in May 1984 and the use of chrysotile ceased in 1987.

Asbestos use was phased out (in Western Australia) from 1981 to 1987 with flat sheeting first, followed by corrugated sheeting in 1985 and piping in 1987. Whilst manufacture of AC materials ceased, such products may have been installed from stockpiles or imported sources after these dates.

Health Effects

Asbestos can be hazardous to health but not all asbestos products present the same risk. The form and condition of the asbestos product has a marked effect on the degree of health risk.

For example, AC products generally present a low risk; however, extreme weathering or inappropriate maintenance of AC can result in the generation of airborne fibres resulting in an increased risk to those who inhale the fibres.

The risk of contracting asbestos related diseases is proportional to the cumulative dose deposited within the lungs. Accordingly, controls follow the ALARP principle, that is, exposure should be maintained As Low As Reasonably Practicable.

It should also be noted that Asbestosis and other asbestos related diseases resulting from inhalation of airborne fibres have a long latency period between exposure and effect, often decades later.

Part 6 of the Code of Practice for the Management and Control of Asbestos In Workplaces [NOHSC: 2018 (2005)] provides a more detailed discussion of asbestos related diseases.

Asbestos Management

General Advice

Several government agencies can provide advice and where appropriate assist in investigating issues of concern relating to asbestos management.

- **Department of Health** provides advice to the public on environmental/public health aspects of handling, removal and disposal of asbestos. The Department has a role in administering the Health (Asbestos) Regulations 1992 and provides advice to local government Environmental Health officers on interpretation and enforcement of the Health Regulations.
- **Department of Consumer and Employment Protection** as Worksafe WA, provides general advice on matters relating to asbestos in the workplace. The Department also enforces the *Occupational Safety and Health Regulations 1996* via inspections and licensing of asbestos removal (thermal & acoustic insulation) contractors and those involved with demolition of asbestos containing structures.
- **Department of Environmental Protection** is responsible for the safe disposal of ACM and the prevention of general pollution. Enforcement of the *Environmental Protection Act 1986*, *Environmental Protection (Controlled Waste) Regulations 2004* and the *Environmental Protection (Rural Landfill) Regulations 2002* is via inspections and licensing of registered disposal sites.
- **Department of Housing and Works** advises on asbestos management or removal and can project manage asbestos removal projects for Government agencies. The Department has established a panel of approved contractors/consultants who conduct testing, inspection and remediation works for ACM.
- **Department of Education and Training** can provide information on asbestos issues relating to buildings occupied by Education personnel, students or parents.
- **Department of Industry and Resources** advises on asbestos materials that occur on mine sites, mineral processing plants, exploration leases or petroleum pipelines. The Department is also responsible for controls during transport of ACM. Enforcement of legislation is conducted via an inspectorate.
- **The Chemistry Centre** is the only Government agency that possesses National Authority of Testing Authorities accreditation for testing of asbestos materials. They have SEM (scanning electron microscopy) and XRD (X-ray diffraction) analysis facilities with an experienced mineralogist. The centre provides specialist advice rather than performing routine analysis.

Asbestos Management Plan

The purpose of an Asbestos Management Plan (AMP) is to:

- Document how an agency intends to prevent exposure to airborne asbestos fibres while ACMs remain in the workplace; and
- Assist with compliance with the asbestos management requirements

The following general principles must be applied in developing an asbestos management plan:

- A risk assessment must be conducted for all identified or presumed ACM by a competent person.
- Where ACM are identified or presumed, the locations must be recorded in a register of ACM
- Reasonable steps must be taken to label all identified ACM
- Control measures must be established to prevent exposure to airborne asbestos fibres and should take into account the results of risk assessments conducted for the identified or presumed ACM.
- The ultimate goal is for all workplaces to be free of ACM. Accordingly, consideration should be given to the removal of ACM during renovation, refurbishment and/or maintenance, where practicable, in preference to other control measures such as enclosure, encapsulation or sealing.
- If ACM are identified or presumed, there must be full consultation, involvement and information sharing during each step of the development of the asbestos management plan – i.e. during the identification, risk assessment and establishment of control measures.
- All workers and contractors on premises where ACM are present or presumed to be present, and all other persons who may be exposed to ACM as a result of being on the premises, must be provided with full information on the occupational health and safety consequences of exposure to asbestos and appropriate control measures. The provision of this information should be recorded.
- The asbestos register must be reviewed, at least annually; and
- The asbestos management plan must be regularly reviewed

For greater detail, see Notes for developing an Asbestos Management Plan (AMP)

Other information

Appendix A - Notes for developing an Asbestos Management Plan (AMP)

Appendix B - Asbestos Management Plan Template (Basic)

Appendix C - Definitions

Appendix D - List of Consultants

Appendix E - Media Strategy

Appendix F - Works Involving ACM

Work Practice Sheets