
APPENDIX E

Media Strategy

Background

Asbestos-related issues are of critical interest to the community and hence the media. The government's approach to dealing with any media interest relating to asbestos needs to involve clear lines of responsibility for information flow to the public.

Lack of communication between government departments, confusion over which department should be speaking to media about an issue and resulting delays in information being conveyed to the public are not helpful.

Asbestos related issues are understandably of concern to the public and require swift and clear coordinated responses from responsible agencies. It is essential for government departments dealing with asbestos related issues to avoid a significant gap between expert assessment of the risk and the public receipt of information about it.

Objective

To improve communication between government departments ensuring the rapid dissemination of accurate, relevant information to the public about asbestos related issues and events. This media strategy should be used in conjunction with the Asbestos Incident Flowchart.

Responsibility for media management

In the case of government buildings, the agency owning the asset will manage the media inquiry. In most cases it will be necessary for the managing government agency to liaise with other agencies to receive technical and general advice. It is important that officers providing information to the public on an asbestos-related issue are fully informed.

Public Affairs contacts for agencies which may need to be involved are listed below.

Department of Health (for advice to the public on environmental/public health aspects of handling, removal and disposal of asbestos): **9222 4042**

Department of Consumer and Employment Protection (Worksafe) (for general advice on matters relating to asbestos in the workplace): **9327 8654**

Department of Environmental Protection: **9278 0300** (responsible for safe disposal of asbestos materials and the prevention of general pollution)

Department of Housing and Works: **9222 4885** (for general advice on asbestos management or controls)

Department of Education and Training: **9264 4111** (for information on asbestos issues relating to buildings occupied by Education staff, students, parents).

Department of Industry and Resources: **9222 3660** (provides advice on asbestos materials that occur in mine sites, mineral processing plants, exploration leases and petroleum pipelines).

Registering asbestos related incident or event

If agencies are responding to the media on an asbestos related incident please forward a copy of the response to Director Maintenance and Minor Works, Department of Housing and Works: email tina.groves@dhw.wa.gov.au

The Department of Housing and Works has been designated by the Asbestos Steering Committee as a collation point for these events.

The WA State Government's position

The ultimate long-term aim is for all buildings occupied or controlled by government agencies to be free of asbestos materials.

The presence of asbestos should be identified and the risk to health evaluated.

It is recognised that AC products in sound condition, left undisturbed present negligible risk to the general community.

Incident Management Flowchart

The effective management of any issue relating to asbestos materials is a function of timeliness and accurate information.

Storm damage and vandalism often require prompt attention to address other safety concerns. If action is tardy then materials can be further damaged or dispersed creating a more hazardous situation.

Immediate action is required when AC products have been disturbed (either broken or cut with out proper control measures) in a way that increases the risk of asbestos fibres being released.

The flowchart on the following page may assist in managing an incident.

Asbestos Incident Flowchart

