



ASBESTOS DISPOSAL

Frequently asked questions

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I live next to an asbestos waste depot – is there any risk to my health?

Asbestos, when properly disposed of, does not pose a risk to workers or residents surrounding a regional waste depot licensed to receive asbestos. To cause a health risk asbestos fibres must not only be released into the air, but also be of a sufficiently small size and inhaled in sufficient quantities to cause a risk to human health.

Why isn't there a 500-metre buffer zone around the disposal site?

The EPA advises that a 500-metres buffer is appropriate around landfills to minimise impacts of activities such as landfill gas. Historic landfills may already have residential development within this buffer however and with appropriate risk assessment development is possible within 500 metres.

Asbestos received at the disposal site is wrapped and sealed in thick plastic or sealed containers. It will be disposed to a designated area and covered with a minimum of 150 mm of waste fill on or before the close of each day's operations.

Using this disposal method prevents any opportunity for asbestos dust to be generated and the likelihood of asbestos fibres being blown off-site in concentrations that could cause exposure significant enough to cause asbestos-related disease is considered to be extremely unlikely. A buffer zone around the waste depot for this purpose is therefore not considered necessary.

How does the EPA regulate asbestos disposal?

The EPA is responsible for regulating the transport and disposal of asbestos waste. This includes providing environmental authorisations or licenses for the operators of sites which store asbestos, operators of landfills which receive asbestos and for companies which transport the materials:

- storage facilities and landfills
- licensed producers of listed waste
- licensed transporters of listed waste
- illegal dumping

In South Australia, air monitoring is required for **any** licensed asbestos removal work. All licensed asbestos removal work must be monitored by a licensed asbestos assessor. Asbestos removal licence holders must notify SafeWork SA five working days prior to commencement of asbestos removal.

What about the trucks that are used to bring asbestos to the waste depot?

Licensed asbestos removalists are required to comply with requirements under the *Work Health and Safety Regulations 2012* regardless of whether the work is done at a workplace or home:

- **Class A asbestos removal licence holders** can remove all asbestos products including friable asbestos materials and asbestos-contaminated dust or debris
- **Class B asbestos removal licence holders** can remove any amount of non-friable asbestos or asbestos-contaminated dust or debris associated with that removal
- **Without a licence**, a person is only permitted to remove up to 10m² of non-friable asbestos or associated dust or debris, which is approximately the size of a standard bedroom wall.

A licensed waste transporter can supply a plastic-lined skip for disposing of asbestos. When the job is complete the plastic needs to be pulled over the top and sealed with duct tape or similar. Asbestos can be taken to landfills but it must be wrapped in manageable-sized packages in thick (200-micron) plastic, and taped at the seams.

What if the plastic tears?

If asbestos products are in good condition and are well maintained, they do not pose a health risk.

Asbestos dust and fibres are known to be hazardous when inhaled, and can be released into the air when products containing asbestos are incorrectly handled, removed or transported for disposal.

An incidental exposure is where an individual may be exposed to a low level of asbestos dust for a short period of time, for example if a bystander is present and a worker breaks apart asbestos containing material and asbestos fibres become airborne. Health monitoring is not required for incidental exposures to airborne asbestos fibres.

Asbestos received must be wrapped and sealed in thick plastic or in sealed containers. Using this disposal method prevents any opportunity for asbestos dust to be generated and the likelihood of asbestos fibres being blown off-site in concentrations that could cause exposure significant enough to cause asbestos-related disease is considered to be extremely unlikely.

Will asbestos contaminate the groundwater?

Asbestos is only a contaminant if inhaled. It does not cause groundwater contamination and is no risk to human health if it enters the groundwater, which is unlikely given the disposal method being that it is wrapped in thick plastic or in sealed containers.

FURTHER INFORMATION

For **Environment Protection Authority** information please contact:

Environment Protection Authority

Ph: (08) 8204 2004

Email: engage.epa@sa.gov.au

Website: www.epa.sa.gov.au

For **SA Health** information please contact:

Scientific Services Branch

Public Health, SA Health

Ph: (08) 8226 7100

Email: public.health@sa.gov.au

Website: www.sahealth.sa.gov.au

