

Wastes containing asbestos – removal, transport and disposal

Updated October 2023

EPA 414/23: This guideline sets out the EPA's minimum requirements for the management, safe handling and disposal of asbestos waste and asbestos-containing materials.

Introduction

Asbestos-containing materials were used extensively in Australian buildings and structures, plant and equipment and in ships, trains and motor vehicles during the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, and some uses, including some friction materials and gaskets, were only discontinued on 31 December 2003.

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

Exposure to asbestos fibres is known to cause mesothelioma, asbestosis and lung cancer. Information on the health aspects of exposure to asbestos products or fibres in domestic situations can be obtained from the Environmental Health Service of the Department of Health, tel: 8226 7100 or www.sahealth.sa.gov.au.

Forms of asbestos-containing materials

Non-friable asbestos-containing material is the most common form, usually found as cement sheeting (either flat or corrugated), vinyl floor tiles, water or flue pipes, or other asbestos-bonded products produced before 1980. Friable asbestos-containing material was used in pipe lagging, insulation and asbestos-backed vinyl floor tiles, and presents significant health risks if disturbed.

Examples of asbestos-containing materials are given in Appendix A of the [Code of Practice for the Safe Removal of Asbestos 2nd Edition \(NOHSC: 2002 \[\(2005\)\]\)](#). If asbestos-containing materials are discovered within or actively mixed with other wastes, the entire load is deemed as an asbestos waste and must be managed appropriately. For example, where a stockpile of waste soil is contaminated with asbestos-containing material the entire stockpile is deemed to be asbestos waste and must be managed as per this guideline, conditions of EPA licence or remediated to remove the asbestos-containing material.

General information on asbestos and its removal can be obtained from www.asbestos.sa.gov.au, or SafeWork SA, tel: 1300 365 255 or www.safework.sa.gov.au

Definitions

Asbestos means:

the fibrous form of mineral silicates belonging to the serpentine and amphibole groups of rock-forming minerals, including actinolite, amosite (brown asbestos), anthophyllite, chrysotile (white asbestos), crocidolite (blue asbestos), tremolite, or any mixture containing one or more of the mineral silicates belonging to the serpentine and amphibole groups.

Asbestos-containing material (ACM) means:

any material, object, product or debris that contains asbestos.

Asbestos waste means:

all removed asbestos-containing material and disposable items used during the asbestos work, such as plastic sheeting used to cover surfaces in the asbestos work area, disposable coveralls, disposable respirators, rags used for cleaning.

Friable asbestos means:

- a non-bonded asbestos fabric, or
- b asbestos-containing material that:
 - i is in the form of powder, or
 - ii can be crumbled, pulverised or reduced to powder by hand pressure when dry.

Non-friable asbestos means:

asbestos-containing material in which the asbestos fibres are bonded by cement, vinyl, resin or similar material, eg asbestos cement.

Additional definitions relating to asbestos can be found in the Code of Practice for the Safe Removal of Asbestos.

Commercial removal and transport of ACM and Asbestos Waste

Commercial removal

Contractors removing **friable** asbestos require:

- an environmental authorisation (licence) as a 'Producer of Listed Waste' issued by the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) as required under section 36 of the *Environment Protection Act 1993* (EP Act)

and

- a licence issued by SafeWork SA under the [Work Health and Safety Regulations 2012](#).

An EPA licence is not required when friable asbestos waste is produced as a result of the following activities: domestic activity, building work, carpentry or joinery, plumbing or gas fitting, or painting and decorating. Contractors engaged specifically to undertake friable asbestos removal do not fall within the exclusions and as such require an EPA licence.

Contractors removing more than 10 m² of **non-friable** asbestos require a relevant licence issued by SafeWork SA under the *Work Health and Safety Regulations 2012*

The EPA expects any asbestos removal must be carried out in accordance with the *Work Health and Safety Regulations 2012*, the Code of Practice for the Safe Removal of Asbestos and/or section 25 (general environmental duty) of the EP Act.

Commercial transport

Persons who transport asbestos waste for fee or reward require an environmental authorisation (licence) as a 'Transporter of Listed Waste', issued by the EPA as required under Section 36 of the EP Act.

Domestic removal and transport of ACM and Asbestos Waste

Friable asbestos

For health and safety reasons, removal of friable asbestos-containing material should only be undertaken by a licensed asbestos removalist (refer to Yellow Pages).

Non-friable asbestos

Householders can choose to engage the services of an asbestos removalist (refer to Yellow Pages) or remove and transport non-friable asbestos-containing material from their property according to the following requirements:

- close all windows and doors to prevent the possible entry of asbestos dust during any external work
- wet the asbestos cement with water before removal (if safe to do so) and keep it wet until packaged for transport
- remove asbestos cement with minimal breakage
- do not drop asbestos sheets on the ground – lower them carefully
- wear disposable coveralls and either an approved respirator or a particle mask suitable for asbestos work
- dispose coveralls and particle masks with the asbestos cement
- do not use power tools to cut or remove asbestos, except when removing screws or fastenings
- double wrap the asbestos in thick plastic (>200 micron thick) using duct tape to form sealed packages of a manageable size, or place the asbestos in plastic-lined bins supplied by an EPA licensed waste transporter. The plastic liners should then be taped down over the contents of the bin.
- all packages should be labelled to identify the contents
- transport the asbestos to a landfill or waste transfer station licensed by the EPA to receive asbestos (a list of EPA licensed landfills and waste transfer stations is available on the [Waste disposal page under 'Asbestos'](#)).
- It is recommended that you contact your local transfer station or waste depot for advice on disposal requirements and costs as these can vary between sites.

Additional information is available at www.asbestos.sa.gov.au

Disclaimer

This publication is a guide only and does not necessarily provide adequate information in relation to every situation. This publication seeks to explain your possible obligations in a helpful and accessible way. In doing so, however, some detail may not be captured. It is important, therefore, that you seek information from the EPA itself regarding your possible obligations and, where appropriate, that you seek your own legal advice.

Further information

Legislation

[Online legislation](#) is freely available.

General information

Environment Protection Authority
GPO Box 2607
Adelaide SA 5001

Telephone: (08) 8204 2004
Facsimile: (08) 8124 4670
Freecall: 1800 623 445 (country)
Website: <https://www.epa.sa.gov.au>
Email: epainfo@sa.gov.au
