

WORKING WITH ASBESTOS PRODUCTS

IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR BUILDERS AND SUBCONTRACTORS

The *Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995* places an obligation on anyone who removes asbestos products. The Act states that all removal of asbestos products must, at a minimum, be performed in accordance with *Part C* of the *Asbestos Advisory Standard 2004*.

This Asbestos Advisory Standard gives practical advice for safely working with asbestos products. Asbestos products are commonly known as (but not limited to):

- Super 6 sheeting (used for roofs and for fences);
- Asbestos-cement (A-C) sheeting (used in wet areas in both domestic or commercial applications); and
- Floor tiles and vinyl floor coverings (used in domestic or commercial applications).

Understanding asbestos

Asbestos is a naturally occurring fibrous mineral. Asbestos is known for its strength, flexibility and its excellent ability to resist heat and chemicals. The three most common types of asbestos are white (chrysotile), brown (amosite) and blue (crocidolite). Asbestos is categorised into two main forms:

1. **Asbestos products** – which contain 10 -15% of concentrated asbestos fibres. They are

generally bound and encapsulated in a cement or resin matrix (e.g. A-C Sheeting).

Note: An asbestos licence is NOT required to remove asbestos products. Working with asbestos products is safe when performed in accordance with the Asbestos Advisory Standard.

2. **Asbestos materials** – which contain unbonded asbestos. This means that the asbestos fibres are not firmly bound and it is more likely that the fibres can become dislodged into the air when disturbed (e.g. sprayed asbestos fire retardants and acoustic and thermal insulation).

Note: The Workplace Health and Safety Regulation 1997 instructs that an asbestos licence and business certificate are required to remove asbestos materials. Working with asbestos materials must be done with extreme caution and care, failure to follow the correct procedures can lead to harmful exposure.

This document does not cover work with asbestos materials. For guidance on safe removal of asbestos material refer to the; Workplace Health and Safety Regulation 1997, Part 11 - Asbestos, and the Asbestos Advisory Standard 2004.

THIS PUBLICATION IS PRODUCED EXCLUSIVELY FOR MEMBERS OF MASTER BUILDERS

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT THE WORKPLACE HEALTH AND SAFETY TEAM ON (07) 3404 6407 OR EMAIL WHS@MASTERBUILDERS.ASN.AU.

Master Builders
Master Builders House
417 Wickham Terrace
Brisbane Queensland 4000
Telephone (07) 3404 6444
Facsimile (07) 3832 2361
ask@masterbuilders.asn.au
www.masterbuilders.asn.au



Working with asbestos products

Builders and subcontractors should use the recommendations in the guide as a minimum standard when working with asbestos products (e.g. A-C Sheeting, floor tiles and vinyl floor coverings etc).

BEFORE WORK STARTS

1. Before you give a quote, have a basic understanding of the job and related activities involved to complete the job. Allow enough time and money for safety equipment (including the appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE), disposal of the product (waste bins, plastic linings, plastic bags and possible dumping fees) and the time consuming activities associated when working with asbestos products like A-C sheeting.
2. Complete the relevant risk assessment(s) on the job before you start work. For example:
 - Identify the material you are working with (e.g. asbestos product, A-C Sheeting);
 - Identify any hazards associated with the work (e.g. asbestos fibres being dislodged into the air);
 - Assess the risk(s) associated (e.g. Inhalation of asbestos fibres); and
 - Implement control measures. Ideally you should always try and eliminate the risk. However, if this is not possible, implement the next best control measure (e.g. adopt a safe work method and use the correct PPE).
3. After you have completed a risk assessment you may need to consider completing a Work Method Statement.

Important details to be covered should include any relevant control measures identified as a result of your risk assessment.

The work method statement must be easy to understand and show how you will control or minimise the associated risk(s) and safely manage your job in a systematic approach. If you are working with other people on the job it is strongly recommended that everyone

work to the same work method statement. Any worker(s) following your work method statement must be given the appropriate information, training, instruction and supervision.

Important Note: If you are a subcontractor or your subcontractor is having difficulties writing a Work Method Statement, contact Master Builders Training and enroll in the Work Method Statement Workshop. More details are available on our website – www.masterbuilders.asn.au - or call (07) 3006 7392.

4. Identify anyone who may be affected by the removal of the asbestos product. Let them know what you are doing and reassure them. People to think about may include other trades working at the time, the next door neighbours and the public.

If you are unsure whether or not a particular material is asbestos, then assume it is and treat it as such. Another alternative is to have the suspect material analysed by an appropriately qualified person to identify exactly what it is. Call Simtars on (07) 3818 5444 for details.

Useful Web Sites

ASBESTOS ADVISORY STANDARD

Go to www.whs.qld.gov.au, click on 'Legislation', 'Advisory Standards' and 'Asbestos 2004'.

WORKPLACE HEALTH AND SAFETY ACT 1995

Go to www.legislation.qld.gov.au, click on 'Legislation', 'W' and scroll down to the 'Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995'.

WORKPLACE HEALTH AND SAFETY REGULATION 1997

Go to www.legislation.qld.gov.au, click on 'Legislation', 'W' and scroll down to the 'Workplace Health and Safety Regulation 1997'.

Master Builders safety circular - 'Asbestos Regulations - building owner responsibilities'

Go to www.masterbuilders.asn.au, click on 'OH&S', 'Housing', 'Asbestos Regulations' and 'download article PDF'.

Removal of Asbestos Products (A-C Sheeting) - Safety Checklist

WHAT NOT TO DO

1. **DO NOT use power tools** – power tools can increase the potential of asbestos fibres becoming airborne which increases the risk of asbestos fibres being inhaled.
2. **DO NOT water blast, scrub with a stiff broom or brush** – it is illegal to water blast asbestos products. Water blasting or scrubbing A-C sheeting can increase the potential of dislodging asbestos fibres into the air.
3. **DO NOT break up or drop fibro sheets** – this can dislodge asbestos fibres into the air and increase the risk of asbestos fibres being inhaled. Remove whole A-C sheets carefully, if working on the roof, lower them down and stack them straight into an appropriate plastic-lined disposal bin.
4. **DO NOT put asbestos waste into your domestic garbage bins or compactors** – it is illegal to put any asbestos waste into domestic bins.
5. **DO NOT leave sheets lying on the ground** – if the sheets are laid on the ground there is a greater chance for the sheets to be in the way, stood on, driven over or broken up.
6. **DO NOT skid the sheets when stacking** – place the sheets carefully into the waste disposal container. Skidding the sheets can dislodge asbestos fibres into the air.
7. **DO NOT re-use second hand asbestos products** – it is illegal to re-use second hand asbestos products in most circumstances.

WHAT TO DO

1. **DO have control of your work site or work area at all times** – this can help avoid anyone placing themselves at risk. This will also help you discharge your workplace health and safety obligations.
2. **DO wear the appropriate PPE** – it is recommended you wear full body disposable overalls and the appropriate P2 or P3 respirator depending on the materials condition and type of work being carried out. Replace filters / respirators when necessary or at least at the completion of each day. Wear disposable gloves, safety boots and any other PPE that is needed throughout the job. All disposable PPE should be discarded at the end of each day's work. Do not risk taking asbestos home with you!
3. **DO wet down gently with water whenever possible** – this will minimise any release of asbestos fibres. Note: Be careful when using this method if you are working on a roof as A-C sheets are slippery and brittle when they are wet.
4. **DO have or know where to get an asbestos approved vacuum cleaner** – this must be fitted with a HEPA filter. It is important to keep all loose fibres contained at all times during the removal of A-C sheeting. You will need to have an approved asbestos vacuum cleaner at your disposal in case sheets are accidentally broken. It is recommended that you vacuum the whole work area when doing a final clean of the job to ensure there are no asbestos fibres left behind anywhere.
5. **DO line your bins with polyethylene sheeting (0.2mm minimum thickness)** – this must be done before the removal process begins. Tip: wet down before transportation and sealing, allow enough excess plastic to seal and cover the waste material. By doing this you are creating an enclosure around the waste that will contain any loose asbestos fibres, it also allows for easy sealing and transport of the waste once job is complete.

6. **DO double bag all broken or smaller pieces of A-C sheeting (max bag size 1200 x 900, 0.2mm minimum thickness) and appropriately mark bag "ASBESTOS"** – this is important as the smaller broken pieces often have more potential to release asbestos fibres. Marking the bag 'asbestos' ensures everyone knows what is inside the bag and can manage the disposal process appropriately.
7. **DO cover up all asbestos products that have been removed** – After removing the sheets cover up and seal in the waste material straight away or as soon as practicable. This will reduce the likelihood of any loose fibres becoming air borne.
8. **DO prevent all other persons from entering the work area** – while removing the sheets, owners and their children should not be allowed in the vicinity of the working area. It is your workplace health and safety obligation that you ensure their safety as well as your own and your workers.
9. **DO clean up your work area and store waste materials appropriately** – it is important that you appropriately clean, store and cover any waste material from the work area at the completion of each day's work. Leave the job in a safe and orderly condition each day so no person's health and safety is placed at risk as a result of your works.
10. **DO find out where you can dump the waste asbestos products** – The Environmental Protection Agency classify A-C sheeting as "hazardous waste" when dumping more than six sheets or 250kg. In addition, when dumping this quantity or more of asbestos products, before you can transport the waste you will need to be an appropriately licensed '**Regulated Waste Transporter**' (this is a requirement of the EPA, call 1300 368 326 for more information). Determining the nearest appropriate disposal site will depend on the quantity of waste asbestos products, policy and requirements of the disposal facility. Contact your local council to find the nearest facility that can accommodate your needs.

Further information and advice on the safe removal of Asbestos Products is available from the Master Builders Health and Safety Team. Call (07) 3404 6407 or get more information from the useful links.

Note: This is a members only circular - you will need your login and password to view it. If you don't have these on hand call Master Builders on (07) 3404 6499.