

FACT SHEET - BONDED ASBESTOS



WHAT IS ASBESTOS?

Asbestos is a hazardous substance made from fibrous silicate minerals found in some rock formations.

Disturbing asbestos may cause fine asbestos fibres to become airborne, which may present a health risk. When airborne the fibres can be breathed in (through the nose or mouth) and penetrate the deepest part of the lungs causing lung cancer, mesothelioma and asbestosis. The occupational exposure standard for all types of asbestos is 0.1 fibres per millilitre of air.

Asbestos diseases can appear or progress after a person is no longer exposed and the delay between first exposure and detection of a disease can be between 25 to 40 years. Asbestos related diseases can be fatal.

Bonded asbestos products may contain white, blue or brown asbestos. The use, or re-use, of all forms of asbestos is banned in Australia.

WHAT IS BONDED ASBESTOS?

When asbestos fibres are bonded to another material, such as a cement or resin binder, it is known as bonded asbestos. It cannot be crumbled, pulverised or reduced to a powder by hand pressure when dry. Common uses in buildings include: flat (fibro), corrugated or compressed asbestos-cement (A-C) sheeting; water, drainage and flue pipes and floor tiles.

If fire, hail, or illegal water blasting damages bonded asbestos, it may become friable asbestos material. A WorkCover licensed friable asbestos removalist must always carry out the removal of friable asbestos. They must also obtain a site-specific permit from WorkCover to carry out this type of work.

CHANGES TO THE BONDED ASBESTOS THRESHOLD

Currently a WorkCover asbestos licence is required to remove 200 square metres or more of bonded asbestos, which is about the size of a fibro house. From 1 July 2007, this will be reduced to 50 square metres and from 1 January 2008, this will be reduced further to 10 square metres. Fifty square metres is about the size of a single garage and 10 square metres is about the size of a bathroom.

These reductions will result in more situations where a licence is required to remove bonded asbestos in NSW. The requirements for friable asbestos are unchanged.

HOW DO I GET A LICENCE TO REMOVE BONDED ASBESTOS?

To obtain a licence, WorkCover requires every licence applicant to meet the 'fit and proper' criteria and have the appropriate training, knowledge and experience to do the work.

'Fit and proper' means an applicant (including all directors and partners) should not have any convictions under NSW OHS law; or have provided any false or misleading information about a licence, permit or notification; or failed to comply with the conditions of a licence; or had an asbestos or demolition licence cancelled or suspended in the past.

Appropriate training means the applicant, or a person nominated by a corporation as a supervisor, must have completed a supervisor's course in removing bonded asbestos (4 hours) in addition to a bonded asbestos removal course (4 hours). These courses are provided by TAFE NSW, the Asbestos Removal Contractors Association (through the Master Builders Association) and by Comet Training.

Experience means at least three years experience in removing bonded or friable asbestos OR three years relevant experience in an appropriate trade. Building, carpentry, demolition work, roofing, construction, kitchen, bathroom or laundry renovation are considered appropriate trades for bonded asbestos removal work provided they were undertaken at a suitable supervisory level.

The removal of bonded asbestos must be supervised at all times by a person with the appropriate training, knowledge and experience to supervise the bonded asbestos removal work.

WHAT TRAINING DO MY EMPLOYEES NEED?

All employees removing any bonded asbestos must have received training in safe working methods for removing bonded asbestos. This is shown by completing a recognised course in bonded asbestos removal (4 hours).

HOW MUCH ASBESTOS CAN I REMOVE?

A licence holder with a bonded asbestos removal licence can remove any amount of bonded asbestos provided they notify WorkCover at least seven days before commencing work. Bonded asbestos licence holders are not allowed to remove, repair or disturb any amount of friable asbestos.

Further information and advice is available from: <http://www.workcover.nsw.gov.au> or **13 10 50**.

Disclaimer

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