

Asbestos Awareness

A practical guide to identifying, understanding, and safely managing asbestos in the workplace.

Presented by Peter McWhinnie



What You Will Learn

01

What Is Asbestos?

Where it is found, health risks and diseases

02

Laws & Prohibitions

WHS Act, regulations, roles, exposure standards and removal licensing

03

Safety Management Plans

Asbestos registers, policies and Safe Work Method Statements

04

Safe Work Practices

Risk management, controlling risks, and what to do if asbestos is found or exposure occurs



Why Are We Really Here?

To protect ourselves, our colleagues, and everyone who depends on us coming home safely.

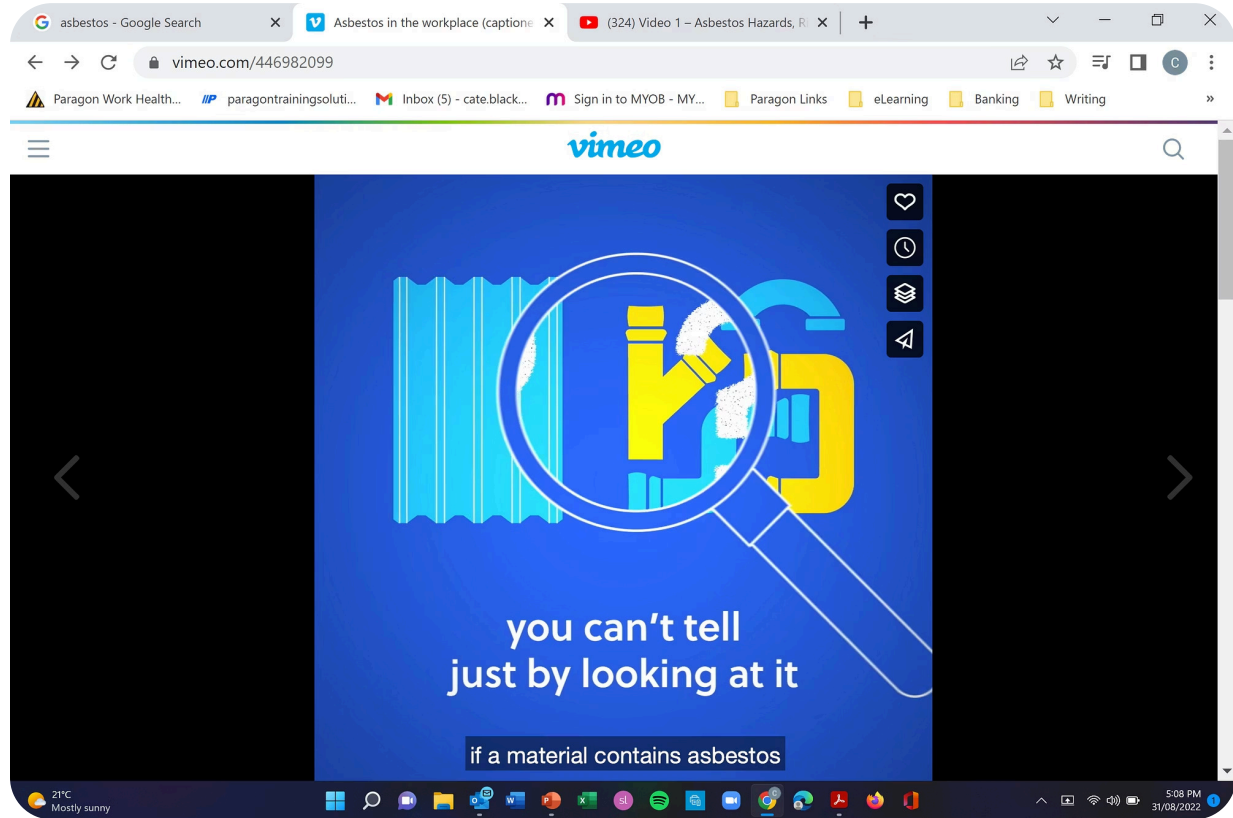


Purpose of This Training

This course provides **asbestos awareness** for workplace settings — practical knowledge for anyone who may encounter asbestos-containing materials on the job.

Despite a total ban in 2003, asbestos remains present in thousands of buildings and machinery parts across Australia. Workers must be able to **identify suspected ACM** and know how to keep themselves and others safe.

- This training is general awareness — not a substitute for licensed asbestos removal training.



CHAPTER 1

What Is Asbestos?

Where might it be found — and what are the health risks?



What Is Asbestos?

Asbestos is a group of naturally occurring fibrous silicate minerals, mined extensively in Australia and overseas. Its unique physical properties made it extremely popular across many industries.

Building Materials

Widely used in asbestos cement sheets, roofing, guttering and wall linings

Automotive Parts

Brake pads, clutch facings — valued for friction and wear resistance

Fire & Heat Protection

Resistant to fire, heat, corrosion, acids, electricity and extreme cold





Asbestos Fibres

Asbestos fibres are strong, heat resistant and have excellent insulating properties. Products are classified in two ways:

Asbestos does not dissolve in water and remains virtually unchanged over long periods.

Non-Friable (Bonded)

Fibres tightly bound in a solid matrix (e.g. cement). Cannot be crumbled by hand. **Lower risk** when undisturbed.

Friable (Loose)

Crumbles easily under light pressure, releasing fine airborne fibres. **Higher risk** — fibres invisible to the naked eye.

Non-Friable Asbestos

Non-friable asbestos products contain fibres tightly bonded within a compound such as cement. The material is solid, rigid, and fibres are **not normally released into the air**.

- Generally safe whilst undisturbed and in good condition
- Cannot be crumbled by hand pressure
- May become friable if damaged or badly weathered
- Considered very low risk when appropriate safety precautions are observed





Friable Asbestos

Friable asbestos contains **loosely bound fibres** that crumble easily. It has been used since the late 1800s for fireproofing, soundproofing and insulation — and may still be found in buildings constructed before 1990.

- More hazardous than non-friable — fibres released easily
- Fibres are **invisible to the naked eye**
- Can remain airborne for long periods or travel large distances on the wind
- Proven dangerous to health if inhaled

Naturally Occurring Asbestos (NOA)

Asbestos can exist naturally in soil and rock formations and may be encountered during road building, construction, excavation and mining activities.

Difficult to Identify

NOA can be any size, shape or colour — green, grey, yellow or white. It is not easily recognisable at the surface or below ground.

Confirm by Testing

The only reliable method is testing by a licensed asbestos assessor or occupational hygienist.

Check Survey Data

Consult geological survey information and state/territory mapping agencies before working in potentially affected areas.





Asbestos in Combined Materials

Asbestos can be very difficult to recognise when it has been mixed with other materials and manufactured into products. Two key terms to know:

ACM — Asbestos-Containing Material

Any material or thing that, as part of its design, contains asbestos. Examples include tile glue, flooring backing, machinery parts, roofing, guttering and ceiling plaster.

ACD — Asbestos-Contaminated Dust or Debris

Dust or debris that has settled within a workplace and is, or is assumed to be, contaminated with asbestos.

The Hidden Danger

200x

Thinner Than Hair

Asbestos fibres are up to 200 times thinner than a human hair — completely invisible to the naked eye

4,000+

Deaths Per Year

Australians die from asbestos-related diseases every year

2x

The Road Toll

Asbestos kills more than double the number of Australians lost on the roads annually

- Fibres can be inhaled without any awareness — and can become permanently trapped deep in the lungs, causing damage over decades.



How Asbestos Affects Your Health

When asbestos is disturbed, fibres become airborne and are easily inhaled. Once trapped in the lungs, they can trigger a range of **life-threatening diseases** — often decades after initial exposure.

- Cancers of the lung, ovary and larynx
- Mesothelioma — cancer of the lung lining
- Asbestosis — chronic scarring of lung tissue
- Pleural disease and pleural plaques

📄 Australia imposed a total ban on the mining, manufacture and use of asbestos on **31 December 2003**. However, ACM remains in millions of homes, public and commercial buildings.



What Is the Risk to Health?

No Safe Threshold

The World Health Organisation states there is no safe level of asbestos exposure. Even very low doses carry a cancer risk due to asbestos's DNA-interaction properties.

Anyone Can Be Exposed

Exposure can occur via naturally occurring asbestos in rock and soil, or through ACM in buildings and infrastructure.

Highest Risk Workers

Those carrying out repairs, maintenance, renovations, roadworks and other work on older buildings containing asbestos materials or waste.



When Does Asbestos Become Hazardous?

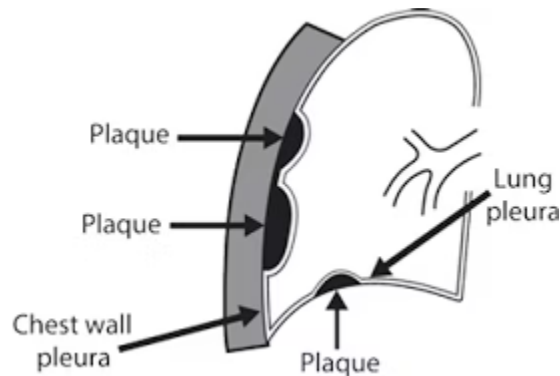
Low-level asbestos fibres occur naturally in the air. Simply living or working in a building that contains asbestos is **not necessarily dangerous**, provided the material is sealed, undamaged and undisturbed.

Risk increases significantly when ACM is:

- Broken, damaged or badly weathered
- Disturbed by drilling, cutting, or demolition
- Present in pipe lagging or sprayed insulation where fibres are not tightly bound
- Removed without appropriate precautions



Pleural Disease, Plaques & Effusion



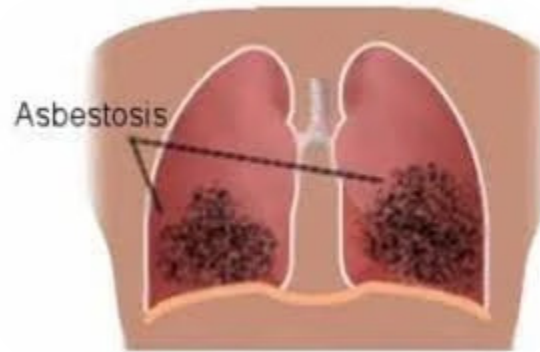
A non-malignant disease that **scars the pleura** — the thin membrane lining the lung and chest cavity. Typically arises 20–30 years after exposure.

- **Pleural plaques:** Areas of fibrous thickening — often the earliest sign of exposure. Benign, but indicate prior asbestos contact.
- **Pleural effusion:** Abnormal fluid build-up between the lungs and chest cavity, causing breathing difficulties.
- **Symptoms:** Often rare; typically discovered incidentally via imaging scan.

Asbestosis

A chronic chest disease caused by inhalation of **high concentrations of asbestos fibres**. Lung tissue becomes hardened and scarred as fibres damage cell membranes. Can develop 10–20 years after exposure.

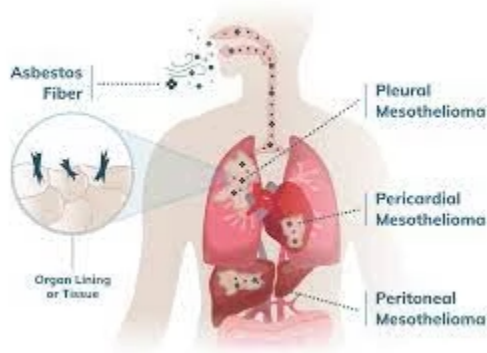
- Early stages difficult to detect on X-ray
- Progresses to a cloudy, ground-glass appearance on imaging
- **Symptoms:** Shortness of breath, persistent cough, chest pain, phlegm, lung infections, pulmonary hypertension and heart failure



Mesothelioma

A cancer of the tissue lining the body cavities — particularly in the chest and abdomen. Can result from **even low-level exposure** and takes 30–45 years to develop.

- Aggressive and painful — average survival just **11 months** from diagnosis
- No cure currently exists
- 700–800 Australians diagnosed each year; 90% have confirmed asbestos exposure history
- **Symptoms:** Dull chest pain, shortness of breath, abdominal pain and weight loss



Lung Cancer

Asbestos exposure can cause cancer of the bronchial tubes, lungs and alveoli. The risk is significantly compounded by other factors.

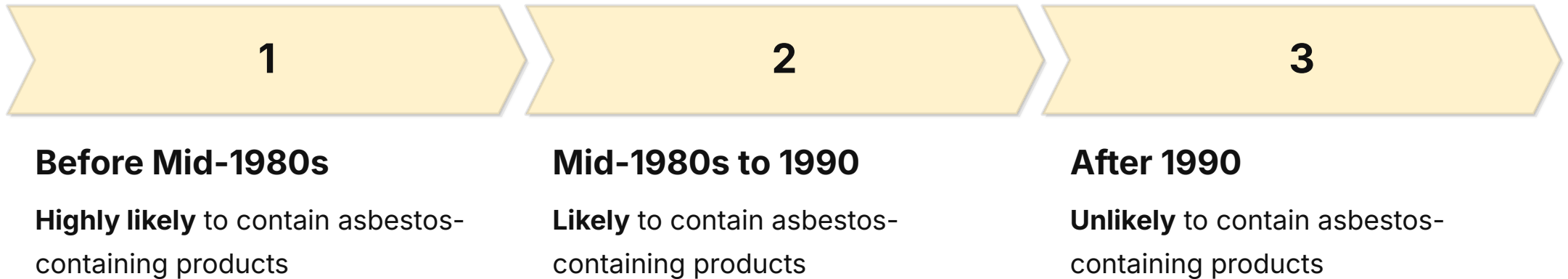
- Smoking **dramatically increases** the risk of lung cancer in those exposed to asbestos
- Pre-existing lung disease further elevates the risk
- **Symptoms:** Irritative cough with increasing sputum, blood-tinged sputum, chest pain and recurring chest infections



Where Might I Find Asbestos?

How Old Is the Building?

Asbestos-containing materials were commonly used in building materials until the mid-1980s. Use the guide below:



📄 If in doubt, always treat the material as though it contains asbestos until confirmed otherwise by a licensed assessor.

Building Waste

Prior to 1990, many homes were constructed using low-cost **fibro (bonded asbestos cement sheeting)** to meet the growing demand for housing.

It was common practice for builders and labourers to **bury broken pieces of asbestos materials** on building sites. These can now be exposed when digging, gardening or redeveloping properties.

- ❏ Always be alert when excavating land around older buildings — buried ACM waste may be present close to the surface.



Outside Buildings

A wide range of external building products manufactured before 1990 may contain asbestos:



Roofing & Cladding

Asbestos cement roofing sheets, shingles and 'brick look' wall cladding



Fencing & Gable Ends

Asbestos cement fencing, gable ends and linings under eaves



Drainage & Moulded Products

Flues, downpipes, guttering, ridge capping and water pipes



Electrical Boxes

External electrical switchboxes and meter boards may contain ACM



Inside Buildings

- Asbestos cement wall linings and ceiling linings
- Splashbacks and backing to wall tiles
- Vinyl floor tiles and asbestos-backed flooring sheets
- Underlay sheeting for ceramic tiles and carpet underlay
- Insulation in wood heaters and sheeting beneath hearths
- Insulation to some air-conditioning heating banks
- Flues to fireplaces and fireplace surrounds
- Loose fill insulation in roof cavities

Other Places Asbestos May Be Found

Sealants & Adhesives

Gaskets, sealants, adhesives and industrial filters

Friction Products

Brake pads, clutch components and other vehicle friction parts

Textiles & Lagging

Oven gloves, fire blankets, woven cable sheathing, pipe and electrical lagging

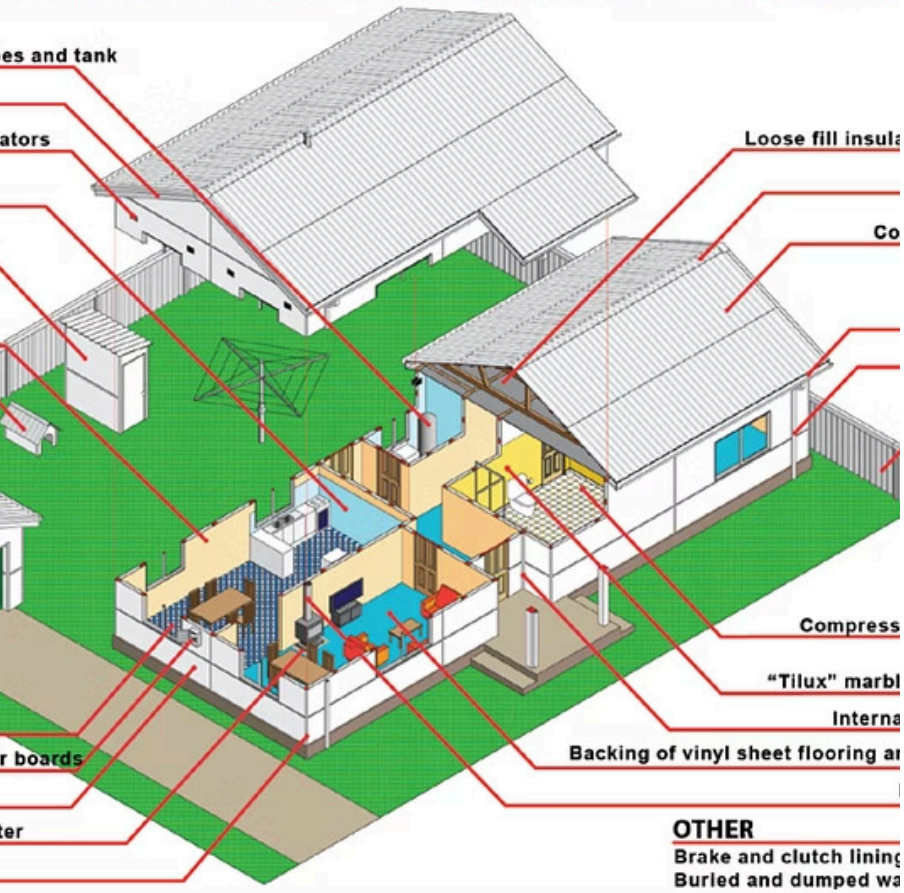
Industrial Products

Sprayed insulation, epoxy paints, rubber and plastic products — and illegally dumped waste



STRALIAN HOMES CONTAIN ASB

OW WHERE ASBESTOS COULD BE ON YOUR PROPER



Asbestos Location Reference

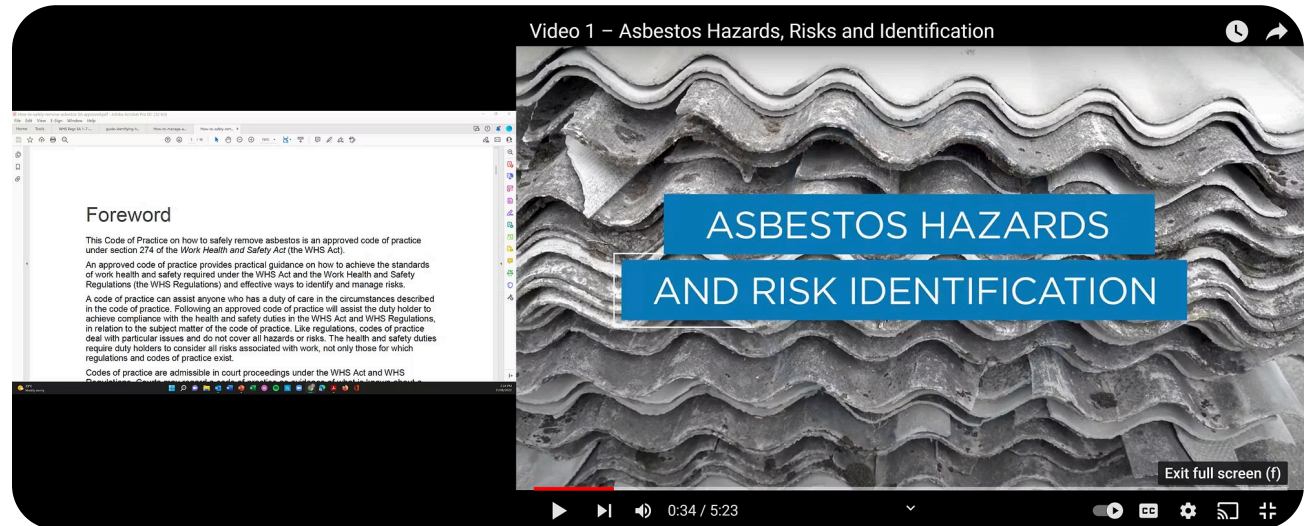
This diagram illustrates the many common locations where asbestos-containing materials may be found throughout a typical residential or commercial building. Familiarise yourself with these locations before commencing any work.

Video: SafeWork NSW

Watch this short video from SafeWork NSW for practical guidance on identifying and managing asbestos in the workplace.

[Watch on YouTube: SafeWork NSW Asbestos Awareness](#)

- 📄 This video reinforces the key messages from this training — take note of the examples of ACM shown and the recommended actions.



CHAPTER 2

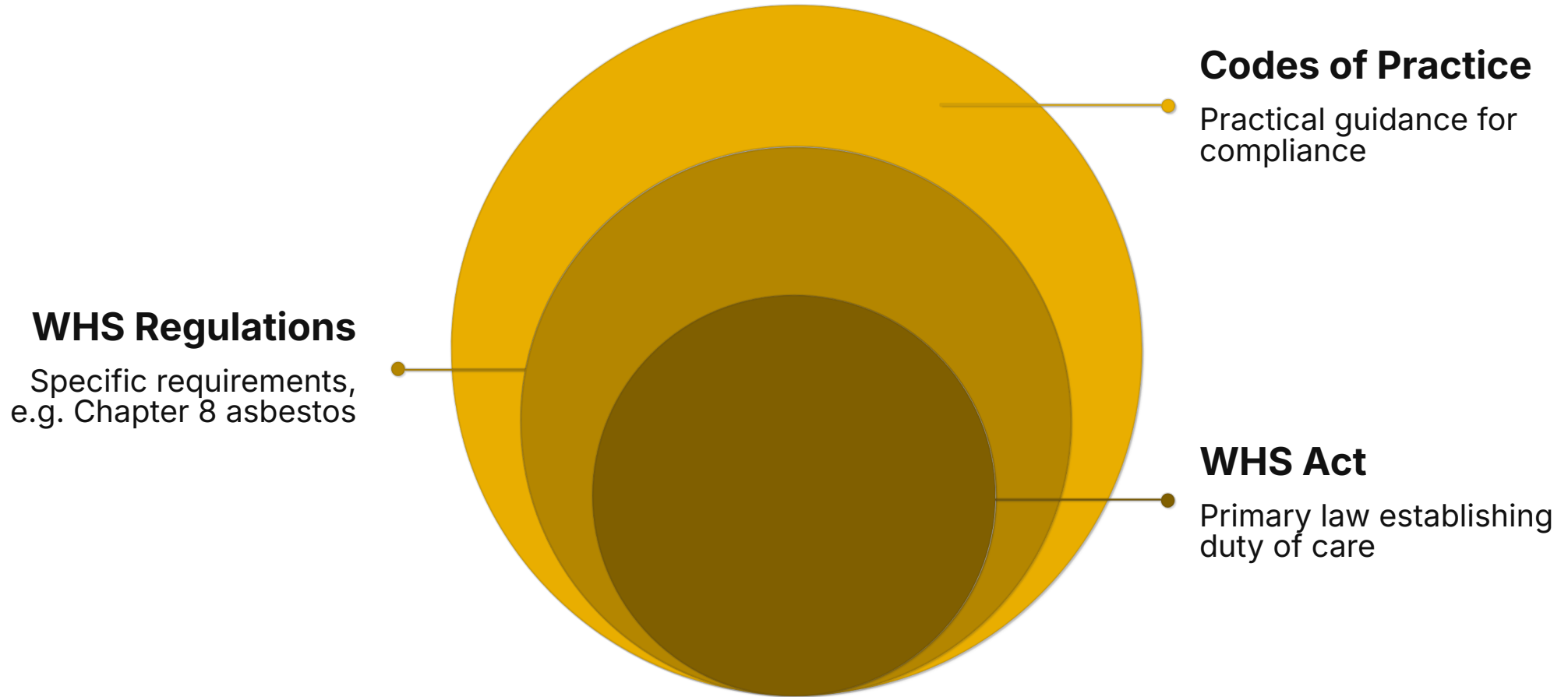
Asbestos and the Law

What are the legal obligations relating to asbestos in Australian workplaces?



Australian WHS Legal Framework

The framework governing asbestos in Australian workplaces is built on several layers of legally binding instruments:



The **WHS Act** requires all parties to keep workers and others safe. The **WHS Regulations** give specific detail on implementation and are equally mandatory as subordinate legislation. **Codes of Practice** set compulsory standards for practical compliance.

WHS Regulations Chapter 8 — Prohibition on Asbestos Work

"A person conducting a business or undertaking must not carry out, or direct or allow a worker to carry out, work involving asbestos."

With limited exceptions, **work involving asbestos is prohibited** under the WHS Regulations. "Work involving asbestos" means manufacturing, supplying, transporting, storing, removing, using, installing, handling, treating, disposing of or disturbing asbestos or ACM.

Individual Penalty

Maximum \$6,000

Corporate Penalty

Maximum \$30,000

General Duty — Exposure to Airborne Asbestos

WHS Regulations s.420

A person conducting a business or undertaking at a workplace must ensure that:

Eliminate Exposure

Exposure of any person at the workplace to airborne asbestos must be **eliminated** so far as is reasonably practicable.

Minimise if Elimination Not Practicable

If elimination is not reasonably practicable, exposure must be **minimised** so far as is reasonably practicable.

Exposure Standard Not Exceeded

The prescribed **exposure standard for asbestos must not be exceeded** at the workplace at any time.

Workplace Exposure Standard

The exposure standard is expressed as a **time-weighted average fibre concentration** in the air breathed by a worker, calculated over an eight-hour working shift.

📌 **0.1 fibre per millilitre of air** — for all forms of asbestos.

Air monitoring must be carried out where there is reason to believe this level may be exceeded. This is a legal obligation, not a discretionary measure.



Approved Codes of Practice

Approved Codes of Practice provide **practical guidance** on how to achieve the standards required under the WHS Act and Regulations. They set a compulsory standard unless a higher standard of safety can be demonstrated.

Two Codes of Practice apply specifically to asbestos work:

How to Manage and Control Asbestos in the Workplace

Guidance on risk assessment, asbestos registers, management plans, control measures and safe work procedures

How to Safely Remove Asbestos

Guidance on planning, licensing requirements, PPE, containment, clearance inspections and waste disposal

Both Codes are available for download from your state or territory's safe work regulator website.

Role of the Safe Work Regulator

Each state and territory has a dedicated **safe work regulator** responsible for enforcing WHS legislation, including asbestos requirements.



Licensing

Licensing of asbestos removalists and assessors; receiving notifications of licensed asbestos removal work



Education & Awareness

Raising awareness of risks and regulations; providing guidance to businesses and workers



Enforcement

Investigating incidents, issuing enforcement notices, prosecuting offences, and receiving health monitoring results

CHAPTER 3

Who Has Duties?

Who holds compulsory duties relating to asbestos work — and what are they required to do?



The PCBU — Primary Duty of Care

Person Conducting a Business or Undertaking

Duty to Workers

A PCBU must ensure, so far as **reasonably practicable**, the health and safety of all workers — including paid staff, volunteers, contractors, labour hire workers and students.

Duty to Others

A PCBU must also ensure that the health and safety of **other persons** — customers, visitors, householders and the general public — is not put at risk from work activities.



PCBU Duties Relating to Asbestos

→ **Eliminate or Minimise Exposure**

Ensure exposure is eliminated if possible, or minimised — and the 0.1 fibre/mL exposure standard is never exceeded

→ **No Unlicensed Asbestos Work**

Must not direct workers to carry out work involving asbestos that requires licensed contractors

→ **Asbestos Register & Management Plan**

Maintain a compliant asbestos register and management plan for any workplace where asbestos is identified or likely present

→ **Health Monitoring & Licensed Removal**

Provide health monitoring for workers carrying out ongoing asbestos work; ensure removal of more than 10m² is carried out by licensed removalists

PCBU Duty to Train Workers

The PCBU must ensure that workers reasonably believed to be involved in asbestos removal or asbestos-related work are trained in:

- Identification of asbestos and ACM
- Safe handling of asbestos and ACM
- Suitable control measures for asbestos and ACM

Workers carrying out licensed asbestos removal require considerably more extensive training as specified under the WHS Regulations.

- 📅 Training records must be kept **for 5 years** after a worker ceases working for the PCBU.





Officers' Duty — Due Diligence

Officers (senior managers and directors) of a business must exercise **due diligence** to ensure the PCBU complies with its health and safety duties.

Stay Informed

Officers must be aware of all WHS duties and obligations applicable to the PCBU

Active Oversight

Cannot delegate responsibility — every officer must actively satisfy themselves that compliance is being achieved

Workplace Control

Those with management or control of a workplace must ensure full compliance with the WHS Regulations on asbestos

Manufacturers, Importers & Suppliers

Those who manufacture, import or supply plant, substances or structures also carry specific duties under the WHS Act.

- Must ensure that products are **not manufactured or supplied in Australia** if they contain asbestos
- This applies to building products, vehicle parts, machinery, plant and equipment of all types

📌 These duties apply whether the product is destined for domestic or commercial use. Ignorance of asbestos content is not a defence.





Duties of Workers

Workers also carry legal obligations under the WHS Act. Whilst at work, every worker must:



Take Reasonable Care

For their own health and safety, and to ensure their actions do not adversely affect others



Comply & Co-operate

Follow reasonable PCBU instructions and cooperate with policies and procedures that have been notified to workers



Asbestos Awareness

Check the Asbestos Register, be alert to unidentified ACM, and report any suspicions immediately



Duties of Other Persons

Visitors, members of the public and other persons at a workplace also have responsibilities under the WHS Act.

Reasonable Care

Take reasonable care for their own health and safety, and avoid acts or omissions that could adversely affect others

Follow Instructions

As far as reasonably able, comply with any reasonable PCBU instruction to allow them to fulfil their WHS obligations

Heed Warning Signs

Do not enter areas known or suspected to contain asbestos; observe all signage and barriers

CHAPTER 4

Safety Management Plans

What plans must be in place to manage asbestos safely and legally?



Asbestos Management Plans

A person with management or control of a workplace **must prepare a written asbestos management plan** if asbestos or ACM has been identified, assumed present, or is likely to be present from time to time.

The plan must be **maintained and kept up-to-date** to reflect the current state of asbestos at the workplace. It is a live document — not a one-off exercise.

- ❏ Failure to maintain an asbestos management plan is a breach of the WHS Regulations and may attract significant penalties.



What Must an Asbestos Management Plan Include?

The plan sets out **what, when and how** asbestos or ACM identified at the workplace will be managed. It must include:



Identification of Asbestos

Reference to the asbestos register; locations of all signs and labels



Naturally Occurring Asbestos

Any available details of NOA present on or near the site



Safe Work Procedures & Controls

Documented procedures and control measures for managing and working near ACM



Incidents, Emergencies & Training

Procedures for asbestos incidents or emergencies; health risk information and training responsibilities for workers



Asbestos Management Plans

A comprehensive guide to managing asbestos risks in the workplace — covering management plans, registers, safe work practices, and risk controls for workplace managers, safety officers, and health & safety representatives.

WORKPLACE SAFETY

ASBESTOS RISK MANAGEMENT

What Is an Asbestos Management Plan?

An asbestos management plan is a formal, documented strategy that outlines how a workplace will identify, assess, and manage asbestos-related risks. It is a legally required tool for ensuring the ongoing safety of all persons at the workplace.

Responsible Persons

Identifies each individual with specific responsibilities under the plan, ensuring clear accountability at every level.

Risk Timetable

Sets out a schedule for managing and reviewing asbestos exposure risks, keeping actions on track and documented.

Air & Health Monitoring

Details air monitoring procedures at the workplace and health monitoring procedures for workers, where required by the regulator.



Accessing the Asbestos Management Plan

The person with management or control of the workplace is legally required to ensure the asbestos management plan is **readily accessible** at all times. The plan must be kept on-site so it is available to all those who need it — not stored offsite or locked away.



Workers

All workers carrying out work at the workplace must be able to access the plan before and during work activities.

Health & Safety Representatives

HSRs must have unrestricted access to the plan to fulfill their representative duties and advise their work group.

PCBUs

Any person conducting a business or undertaking who performs work at the workplace must also have access to the plan.



Reviewing the Asbestos Management Plan

The person with management or control of the workplace must ensure the asbestos management plan is reviewed **at least once every five years** — or sooner if circumstances change. Keeping the plan current is critical to maintaining effective protection.

→ Asbestos Register Review

When the asbestos register is reviewed or updated, the management plan must also be revisited to remain aligned.

→ Changes to Control Measures

Any change to existing control measures — including removal, disturbance, sealing, or enclosure of asbestos — triggers a mandatory review.

→ Workplace Changes

Physical or operational changes to the workplace that render the existing plan inadequate must prompt an immediate review.

→ HSR Request

A health and safety representative may request a review if they reasonably believe the plan no longer adequately protects workers in their work group.



Emergencies & Disasters

Asbestos management plans must include clear procedures for **emergency and disaster scenarios** where asbestos disturbance or release may occur unexpectedly. Pre-planned responses can prevent mass exposure events during high-stress situations.



Natural Disasters

Plans must address storms, cyclones, floods, and bushfires — all of which can disturb or destroy asbestos-containing materials, spreading fibres across wide areas.



Mass Contamination

Events causing airborne distribution of asbestos fibres require immediate isolation procedures, public communication strategies, and engagement with emergency services and environmental regulators.



Asbestos Register

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ats poige belinesbible verkero son thei a cope thencetiens pou oeile
at torie is allertes safety.

Register	Asbestos
Asbesto	
Register	
Appeto Location	
Sppecto Locations	
Specte Location	
Spetto Lopees	
Salpeneating Register	
Spper Loation	
Spenco location	
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Spectc Location	
Ayper Lokies	
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Segerc Locations	
Spperc Locations	

What Is an Asbestos Register?

An asbestos register is a comprehensive record of all identified — or reasonably assumed — asbestos and asbestos-containing materials (ACM) present at a workplace. It is a living document that must be kept accurate and up to date.

Location Details

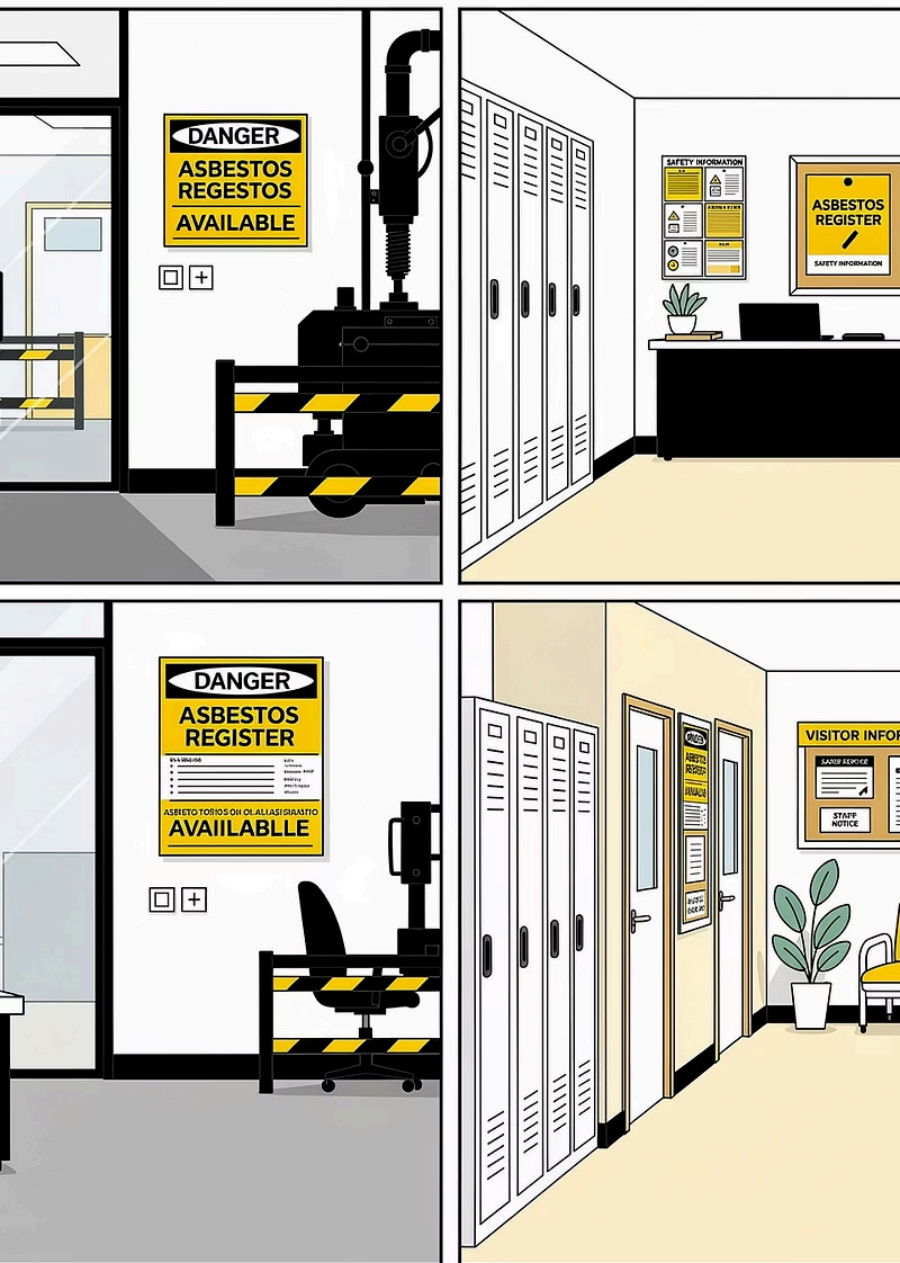
Documents precisely where asbestos or ACM has been found, including inaccessible areas where asbestos is assumed to be present.

Type of Asbestos

Records the form and type of asbestos identified — friable or non-friable — to inform appropriate risk controls and removal procedures.

History of Actions

Captures a history of all activities relating to asbestos on site: removals, disturbances, sealing, enclosure, and testing results.



Which Workplaces Must Have an Asbestos Register?

Register IS Required

- Asbestos has been identified or assumed to be present at the workplace
- Asbestos is frequently brought in — for example, vehicles or plant that contain asbestos are regularly brought in for repair

Register NOT Required

- Workplace was constructed after **31 December 2003**, no asbestos has been identified, and asbestos is rarely brought in
- Asbestos is only temporarily present — such as a single, short-term repair of plant
- The workplace is a **residential home**



Accessing the Asbestos Register

Where a workplace has an asbestos register, the person with management or control must ensure it is **readily accessible** to those who need it — before work commences and throughout the duration of any work activity on site.



Workers

All workers performing tasks at the workplace must be able to consult the register — particularly before beginning any work that could disturb building materials.



Health & Safety Representatives

HSRs who represent workers at the workplace must have full access to the register to effectively carry out their advisory and oversight responsibilities.



PCBUs

Any PCBU whose workers carry out work at the workplace must be given access to the register to properly manage risk for their employees.



Reviewing & Revising the Asbestos Register

The asbestos register is not a set-and-forget document. The person with management or control must ensure it is reviewed **at least every five years**, or whenever any of the following trigger events occur.

01

Management Plan Review

Whenever the asbestos management plan is formally reviewed, the register must also be reviewed and updated to reflect any changes.

03

Asbestos Disturbed or Removed

Any removal, disturbance, sealing, or enclosure of asbestos requires the register to be revised to capture the updated status of those materials.

02

New Asbestos Identified

If additional asbestos or ACM is identified anywhere at the workplace, the register must be updated immediately to reflect the new finding.

04

Refurbishment or Demolition

Before any refurbishment or demolition work is undertaken, the register must be reviewed to ensure all asbestos hazards are known and accounted for.



Safe Work Method Statements (SWMS)

A Safe Work Method Statement is a critical component of any site safety management system where asbestos may be present. It must be reviewed and understood before commencing work at any new site.

Register Access

Specifies where and how workers can access the asbestos register before starting work on site.

Do's & Don'ts

Details what workers should and should not do to protect themselves and others from asbestos exposure.

Control Methods & PPE

Outlines required control measures, including personal protective equipment to be applied for the specific work tasks.

Minor Removal Policy

States whether minor removals (under 10 sq. m non-friable) are permitted on site, or whether a "make safe and report" procedure applies.

Suspected Asbestos Procedure

Instructs workers on the process to follow if suspected asbestos is identified — including calling a licensed asbestos assessor or sending samples to a NATA-approved laboratory.

 **Always check for the SWMS on asbestos before commencing work at a new site.**



Safe Work Practices

A risk management approach to workplace safety in the presence of asbestos

CHAPTER 2

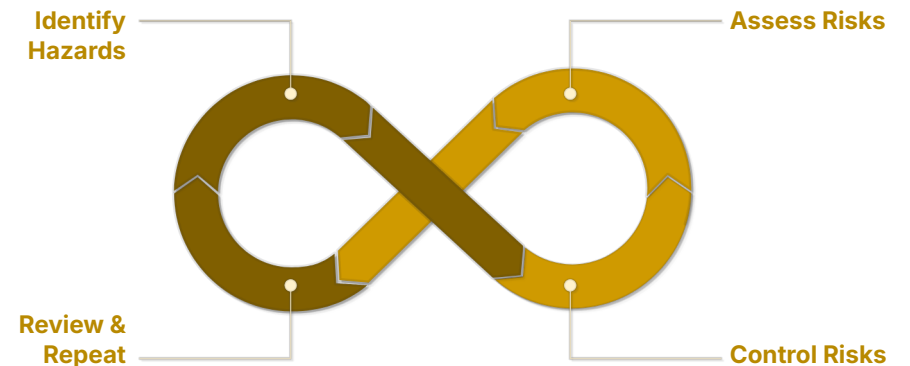
RISK MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

WHS Risk Management

The Core Cycle

A key part of maintaining a safe workplace is building the habit of systematically identifying hazards, conducting a thorough risk assessment, and implementing the most effective controls available. Then review — and repeat.

This cycle is not a one-time exercise. It is an ongoing discipline that ensures your workplace continuously improves its safety performance over time.



Consultation: Who Needs to Be Involved?

Effective asbestos management requires meaningful consultation with all parties who may be affected. Decisions made without input from those doing the work are rarely as effective or as practical as those developed collaboratively.



Workers

Workers carry out the work and are best positioned to identify hazards on site. Practical safety controls must be designed with their input to ensure effectiveness and compliance.



Other PCBU's

Businesses supplying contractors to work on site must have input on the type of work performed and how it can be done safely in the presence of asbestos.



Other Stakeholders

Home owners and local community members may also be affected, particularly where asbestos disturbance could impact surrounding areas.



Record of WHS Discussion

Keep everyone accountable by recording all consultation discussions and agreed action points — capturing who is responsible, for what, where, and by when.

Hazard Identification

Before any work begins, a thorough site inspection must be carried out to identify all known or suspected asbestos hazards. You **cannot determine the presence of asbestos by visual inspection alone** — if in doubt, treat it as asbestos and arrange testing.

→ Check the Asbestos Register

Review the register for all known or suspected locations of asbestos at the workplace before commencing any work that may disturb building materials.

→ Assess Condition of ACM

Inspect the condition of asbestos-containing materials on site. Is the material in good condition, well sealed, and undisturbed — or is it damaged and therefore significantly more hazardous?

→ Consider Building Age

Buildings constructed before 1987 may contain asbestos in many locations. Buildings pre-dating this period should be assumed to contain asbestos until proven otherwise.

→ Arrange Testing if Unsure

Call in a licensed asbestos assessor and send samples to a NATA-accredited laboratory — or one approved by the regulator — for formal analysis. Refer to the Code of Practice for sampling procedure.

Risk Assessment: Two Key Questions

Once a hazard has been identified, a formal risk assessment must be carried out. Asbestos-related diseases — including asbestosis, lung cancer, and mesothelioma — are serious, often fatal conditions. There is **no known safe level of exposure**.

Question 1: Likelihood

How likely is asbestos exposure to occur? Consider whether loose friable fibres are present, whether ACM is damaged, or whether naturally occurring asbestos (NOA) is in the vicinity of excavation work. Or is ACM in good condition, well sealed, and undisturbed?

Question 2: Severity

What are the consequences if exposure does occur? Asbestos-related diseases are usually fatal. There is no known safe limit for asbestos fibre exposure — even brief exposure carries long-term health risks.

❏ **The severity of consequences from asbestos exposure is always rated VERY HIGH.** Even where likelihood is low, the potential outcome demands serious and proportionate controls.

Weighing Up the Risk

Higher Likelihood Indicators

- Loose fibres of friable asbestos are present
- Non-friable ACM that is visibly damaged
- Known seams of Naturally Occurring Asbestos (NOA) near excavation work
- Air monitoring results above 0.1 fibre/mL

Lower Likelihood Indicators

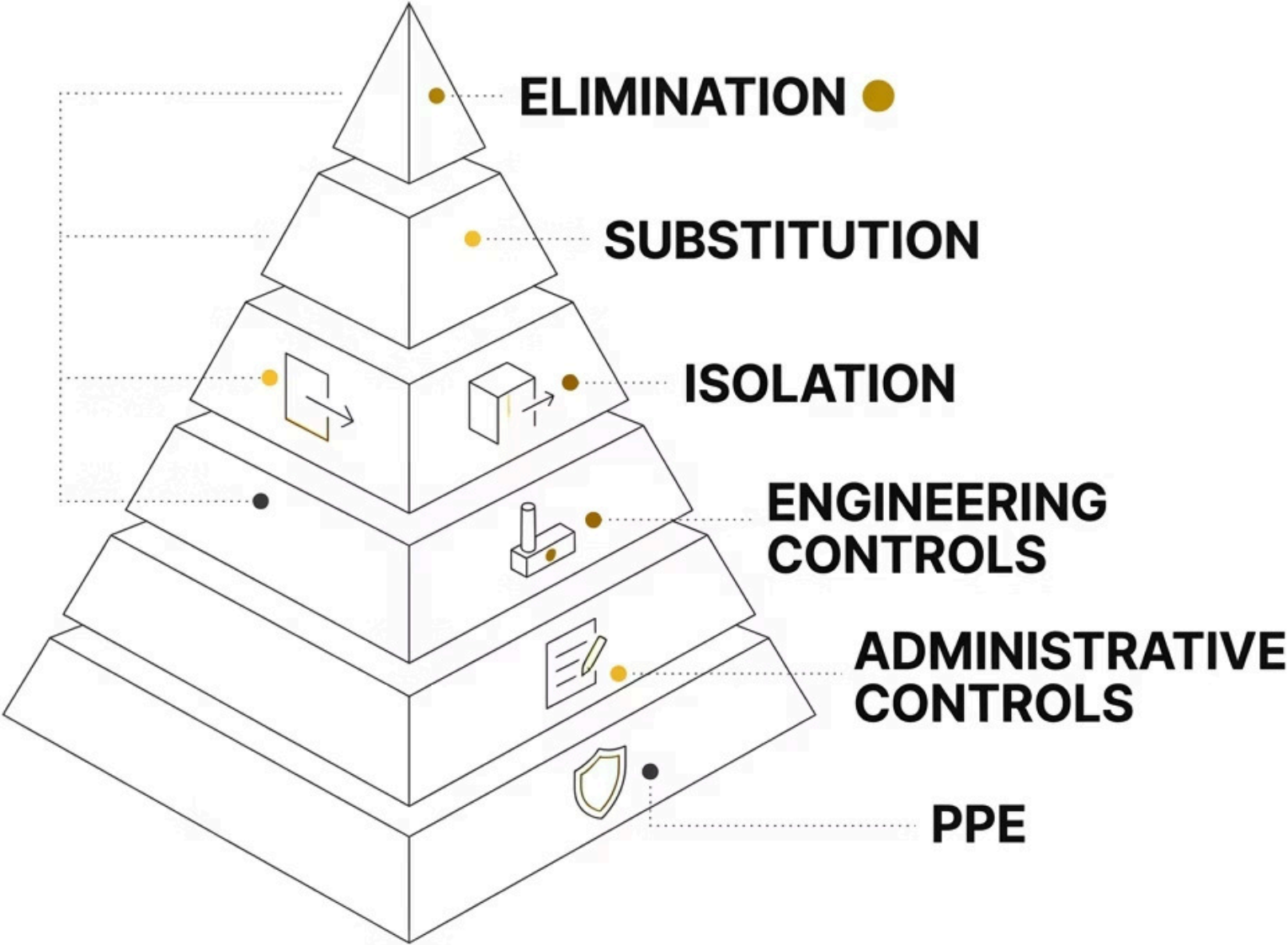
- ACM is in good condition, well sealed, and undisturbed
- No NOA has been identified in the area
- Atmospheric testing results are below 0.1 fibre/mL of air

Remember: regardless of likelihood, the severity of asbestos-related disease is always extreme. Controls must be proportionate.



Controlling the Risks: Hierarchy of Control

When managing asbestos risks, the **Hierarchy of Control** must be followed — beginning with the most effective control measures and working down. Wherever possible, start with elimination. Where that is not possible, apply multiple controls in combination to minimize risk.



No single control should be relied upon in isolation. Combining higher-level controls with administrative procedures and appropriate PPE provides the strongest protection for workers.



Removing Asbestos: Who Can Do It?

Elimination of the hazard through asbestos removal is the most effective control measure — once removed, the hazard no longer poses a risk. However, removal must only be carried out by qualified personnel.

Licensed Removalists

Only **licensed asbestos removalists** are permitted to carry out asbestos removal work in most circumstances. Licensing requirements are strictly enforced under WHS Regulations.

Small Quantity Exception

An exception applies for quantities of **10 square metres or less** of non-friable asbestos or ACM — but this exception does **not apply in the ACT**. Check your jurisdiction's requirements.

Friable Asbestos

Friable asbestos must only be removed by a **Class A licensed asbestos removalist**. This is a non-negotiable requirement regardless of quantity.



Should We Remove Small Quantities from Our Sites?

Even when removal of small quantities is legally permitted, the **safest course of action** is always to engage a licensed asbestos removal contractor. Licensed contractors possess the expertise, equipment, and training to carry out this work safely — protecting both workers and the public.

Check the Management Plan

Your PCBU's asbestos management plan will specify whether small quantity removals are permitted on site. Always follow this policy first.

If Removal Is Permitted

Follow the procedure detailed in the Code of Practice: *How to Safely Remove Asbestos*. The safety precautions required are equivalent to those for licensed removal work.

If Removal Is Not Permitted

Apply the "**make safe and report**" procedure — isolate the hazard, prevent access, and arrange for a licensed contractor to carry out the removal.

Safe Removal: Understanding the Process

Whether your workers will be removing small quantities or you are engaging a licensed contractor, understanding what safe removal looks like is essential. Only workers with sufficient training, experience, and protective equipment should carry out any removal work. **Plan thoroughly before you begin.**

Don PPE & Isolate

Wear certified PPE and restrict access.

Wet Removal

Use controlled wet techniques to remove.

Prepare Work Area

Seal space and gather required equipment.

Package & Decontaminate

Bag waste and clean personnel and tools.

Each phase must be completed in sequence. Skipping steps — even minor ones — can result in asbestos fibre release and worker exposure.

Preparing the Work Area

Thorough preparation is the foundation of safe asbestos removal. Before any materials are disturbed, the work area must be properly set up to prevent fibre release and protect all persons in the vicinity.

01

Isolate & Restrict Access

Erect warning signs and physical barriers around the work area. Limit access strictly to those directly involved in the removal work.

02

Cover Vents & Turn Off Air Systems

Cover all air vents and turn off air-conditioning and fans to prevent fibres from circulating through the building's ventilation system.

03

Avoid Windy Conditions

Do not carry out asbestos removal work outdoors on windy days. Wind disperses fibres rapidly and unpredictably, posing risks to the wider public.

04

Clear the Area

Remove all personal belongings, loose items, soft furnishings, and anything else that could become contaminated and is difficult to decontaminate.

05

Lay Polythene Sheeting

Cover the floor or ground with new, heavy-duty 200 µm (minimum) polythene plastic sheeting to capture any debris and prevent ground contamination.



Equipment Required for Safe Removal

All equipment must be assembled and confirmed on site **before any removal work commences**. Stopping work mid-removal to source missing materials risks unnecessary fibre exposure.

Containment Materials

- Plastic sheeting — new, minimum 200 µm polythene
- Duct tape for sealing
- Warning notices and physical barricades

Tools & Fixings

- Bolt cutters for sheets bolted in place
- Garden hose with fine spray nozzle, or spray bottle with wetting agent
- Bucket of water and disposable rags

Waste Containment

- Solid, clearly labelled asbestos-waste container
- Asbestos waste bags — new, labelled, 200 µm thick polythene plastic

Personal Protective Equipment: Coveralls & Respirators

Ordinary work clothing and standard dust masks provide **no effective protection** against asbestos fibres. The correct PPE must be selected, fitted, and worn correctly throughout all asbestos work — and must be disposed of or decontaminated afterward.

Coveralls

- Disposable, Type 5 Category 3 or equivalent — suitable for asbestos work
- Cuffs sealed with tape; hood worn over respirator straps; fit over top of footwear
- Disposed of as asbestos waste after a **single use only**

Respiratory Protection

- Ordinary dust masks are **not effective** — do not use
- Use a well-fitted half-face filter respirator with a Class P2 filter cartridge, or a Class P2 disposable respirator
- Must comply with ANZ Standard *1716:2012*

Personal Protective Equipment: Gloves & Footwear

Gloves

- Single-use gloves must be worn at all times during asbestos work
- Disposed of as asbestos waste — never reused
- Hands and fingernails must be thoroughly cleaned whenever leaving the asbestos work area

Footwear

- Safety footwear (e.g., steel-capped work boots or gumboots) is required — avoid laces as they are difficult to decontaminate
- Footwear may remain in the asbestos area for the duration of work, stored upside down
- Must not be shared between workers
- At completion: must be decontaminated and double-bagged for reuse, or disposed of as asbestos waste

❏ Keep all PPE on during cleanup. Remove respirator **last** — after all other PPE has been removed and disposed of.

Tools: What to Use & What to Avoid

The wrong tools can generate significant quantities of airborne asbestos dust. Tool selection is a critical safety decision that must not be left to chance or habit.

Approved Tools

- Manually operated hand tools — preferred for all asbestos work
- Low-speed, battery-powered tools only if additional force is necessary — used with dust suppression measures such as wetting or extraction hoods
- Asbestos-grade vacuum cleaners complying with Class H requirements of *AS/NZS 60335.2.69*, fitted with HEPA filters

Prohibited Tools

- High-pressure water sprays and compressed air sprayers — prohibited under WHS Regulations
- High-speed power tools: angle grinders, sanders, saws, high-speed drills
- Brooms and brushes (dry sweeping)
- Standard household vacuum cleaners

When removal work is complete, all tools must be decontaminated and double-bagged, or disposed of as asbestos waste.

Removing Asbestos Materials Safely

During the removal process, every action must be taken to minimize fibre release. Wet methods are essential — keeping materials damp suppresses airborne dust throughout the work.

01

Wet Down the Material

Thoroughly wet the asbestos material before starting and at regular intervals throughout. Use water, water with detergent, or a PVA solution. Use low-pressure spray only.

03

Lower — Do Not Drop

Carefully lower large pieces of ACM to the ground. Do not drop materials or place them in rubble chutes — impact causes fibre release.

02

Remove Fixings Carefully

Dampen and cut bolts while avoiding contact with asbestos material. Place bolts and fixings in the asbestos-waste container. Use bolt cutters to release gutters, drain pipes, and ridge caps.

04

Stack and Contain Debris

Stack fibro asbestos-cement sheets carefully. Avoid breaking or crushing ACM. Place small pieces of debris in the asbestos-waste container immediately.



Packaging Asbestos Waste

All asbestos waste must be correctly packaged before it leaves the work area. Improper packaging is a legal breach and a significant public health risk.

Keep Material Wet

Maintain moisture in all asbestos materials until they are fully packaged and sealed to prevent fibre release during handling.

Use Asbestos Waste Bags

Place smaller pieces in new, labelled 200 µm asbestos waste bags. Seal completely with adhesive tape.

Double-Wrap Large Pieces

Wrap large pieces of ACM in two layers of 200 µm plastic sheeting, with all openings sealed securely with duct tape.

Label All Packages

Affix asbestos warning stickers, or clearly mark all packages **ASBESTOS WASTE** using a permanent marker. Store in a solid, secure, labelled waste bin until legal removal.

☐ Asbestos waste must **never** be placed in general council waste or buried. This is a legal requirement.



Preparing Asbestos Waste for Disposal

Asbestos waste includes not just asbestos itself, but **any material contaminated with asbestos** — unless it has been fully decontaminated. This includes used PPE, rags, plastic sheeting, and tools that cannot be decontaminated.

What Must Be Disposed Of

- Asbestos and all materials containing asbestos
- Anything contaminated with asbestos that cannot be fully decontaminated
- Used PPE, disposable rags, and plastic sheeting

Packaging Requirements

- Package in two layers of 200 μm plastic sheeting, or in approved asbestos waste bags
- Completely seal packages with adhesive tape
- Label clearly with asbestos warning stickers or permanent marker

Storage Prior to Collection

- Store packaged asbestos waste in a solid, secure, and clearly labelled waste bin or skip
- Keep in a secure area until legally transported for disposal

Decontamination: Wet Method

Decontamination is mandatory whenever a person or piece of equipment leaves the asbestos work area, and when removal work is complete. Clean and dirty areas must be kept physically separate to prevent cross-contamination.

Wet Decontamination ("Wet Wiping")

Uses disposable rags to wipe contaminated surfaces. This is the **preferred method** in most circumstances. If using a bucket of water, rags must not be re-wetted in the bucket — the water will become contaminated and must be treated as asbestos waste. All rags are disposed of as asbestos-contaminated waste.

Contaminated Clothing

Contaminated clothing must be disposed of as asbestos waste, or sent to a suitably equipped commercial laundry that is aware of the contamination. **Asbestos-contaminated clothing must not be laundered at home.**

- ❏ Always maintain separation between dirty and clean decontamination areas. Airflow should move **toward** the asbestos removal area — not outward.

Decontamination: Dry Method & Personal Decontamination

Dry Decontamination

Used only when wet methods pose a risk due to electricity or slipping hazards. Involves rolling or folding up contaminated sheeting and sealing it, or using an asbestos-grade vacuum cleaner. This method should be used as a last resort only.

Personal Decontamination Areas

- **Dirty area** (closest to removal zone): Vacuum and wipe contaminated surfaces and clothing
- **Intermediate area**: Store contaminated footwear, dispose of PPE into labelled bags, shower
- **Clean area**: Store clean RPE; put on clean clothes

Areas are physically separated. Contaminated water is collected and disposed of as asbestos waste.

Safe Disposal of Asbestos Materials

Transport & Disposal

Securely transport all packaged asbestos waste to a **designated asbestos waste disposal facility**. Contact the State/Territory Environmental Protection Agency for transport and disposal requirements specific to your jurisdiction.

Find your nearest disposal facility at: www.asbestossafety.gov.au

Clearance Inspection

For all **licensed removal work**, a clearance inspection of the site must be carried out by a **licensed asbestos assessor** upon completion. A clearance certificate is required before the area can be reoccupied for ordinary use.

The assessor will confirm that the site has been cleaned properly and that there are no residual signs of asbestos dust or debris.

"Make Safe and Report": Non-Removal Controls

When asbestos cannot be immediately removed — or when removal is not warranted because the exposure standard is not exceeded — apply alternative controls while arranging for appropriate management or licensed removal.

Control Type	Examples	Details
Isolation	Physical separation	Shut down the work area; erect warning signs and tape off the hazard; wet down the area with hose or mist to suppress dust; secure portable asbestos-containing equipment
Administration	Reporting & Training	Report hazards for assessment and possible removal; train workers to recognise potential ACM; establish a clear procedure for all workers when damaged or friable asbestos is found
PPE	Protective equipment	Apply appropriate PPE whenever in the vicinity of a suspected asbestos hazard — particularly when wetting down an area to make it safe

Enclosure & Encapsulation

Where asbestos cannot be removed, physical containment methods may be used to prevent fibre release. These methods require specialist expertise and can only be applied to **non-friable asbestos**.

Enclosure

A physical barrier — such as a wall or structure — is built around the asbestos to prevent any fibres from entering the air. Access is restricted except for periodic inspections. Can only be used for non-friable asbestos and must be maintained to remain effective.

Encapsulation

A resilient matrix — such as reinforced plastics, vinyls, resins, mastics, or cement — is applied to create a durable seal over the asbestos surface. Prevents fibre release unless the matrix is damaged. Can only be applied when the original asbestos bond is still intact, and must be carried out by experienced personnel only.



Sealing Asbestos Surfaces

Sealing — coating or painting an asbestos surface — is the **least effective** method of controlling asbestos fibre release. It should only be considered as a **temporary measure** while more effective controls, such as enclosure or removal, are being arranged.

When It Is Used

Commonly applied to sheeting, pipe insulation, furnace and boiler insulation. Prevents short-term exposure to airborne fibres when the surface is otherwise stable.

Limitations

Sealing is **not appropriate** where the sealed material may suffer mechanical damage — such as from drilling or sanding. It provides no protection once the surface coating is compromised.

Temporary Use Only

Always plan to progress to a more effective and permanent control measure. Sealing is a stop-gap, not a long-term solution.

Using Tools on Asbestos Materials

Strictly Prohibited

- High-pressure water sprayers
- Compressed air tools
- Angle grinders, sanders, saws
- High-speed drills
- Dry sweeping, cutting, grinding, or sanding

These methods are **prohibited under WHS Regulations** — they cause asbestos to become friable and generate dangerous levels of airborne fibres.

Approved Practices

- Manually operated hand tools — always preferred
- Low-speed battery-powered tools only if additional force is required
- Always combined with dust suppression: wetting or extraction hoods
- Appropriate respiratory protection must be worn at all times



Safe Work Practices When Working Around Asbestos

A range of practical safety measures can significantly reduce the risk of exposure when working in the vicinity of asbestos. These measures complement — but do not replace — higher-order controls.



Wetting Asbestos Surfaces

Use surfactants or wetting agents such as detergent water, or thickened substances like hair gel or shaving cream, to coat surfaces being worked on and suppress fibre release. Only if no electrical shock risk is present.



Shadow Vacuuming

Use an asbestos-grade HEPA vacuum cleaner to continuously capture dust and fibres at the point of generation while work is being carried out.



Controlled Environment

Where possible, perform the task within a ventilated enclosure to contain fibres and prevent wider contamination of the work area.



Dispose & Shower

Dispose of all clothing and PPE as asbestos waste after completing work, and shower before leaving the site to ensure no fibre contamination is transported offsite.

Personal Protective Equipment: Selection & Use

PPE must always be used in **combination with other control measures** — it is never the sole or primary line of defence against asbestos exposure. Selection must be based on a thorough risk assessment of the specific tasks being performed.



Coveralls

Disposable Type 5 Category 3 coveralls. Single use only — disposed of as asbestos waste at the end of the work.



Respirators

Half-face P2 filter respirator compliant with ANZ Standard 1716:2012. Must be correctly fitted. Remove last during decontamination.



Gloves

Single-use gloves disposed of as asbestos waste. Hands thoroughly washed when leaving the work area.



Boots

Steel-capped safety boots or gumboots. No laces. Decontaminated at the end of work, or disposed of as asbestos waste.

PPE that is not disposable must be decontaminated and stored in a sealed container until reused for asbestos-related work. The ease of decontamination should be a factor in PPE selection.

Warning Signs

Where asbestos has been identified at a workplace, **warning signs must be placed** in all affected locations. Clear, visible signage ensures that workers and others are aware of the hazard before entering an area, and supports compliance with access restrictions.

Placement

Signs must be placed at all entry points and around the perimeter of any area where asbestos has been identified or is being worked on. Signs must remain in place until the area has been cleared and a clearance certificate issued.

Content

Signs should clearly state the presence of asbestos-containing material and direct workers to consult the asbestos register before commencing work. Standard asbestos hazard signage compliant with relevant Australian standards should be used.

- ❏ Warning signs are a minimum requirement — they support physical controls but do not replace them. Signage alone is not sufficient to protect workers.

Disposing & Laundering Contaminated Clothing

Disposable coveralls should be used whenever possible. When non-disposable clothing is used, strict laundering procedures must be followed to prevent secondary contamination of workers, families, and the general public.

01

Remove Clothing Wet

Contaminated clothing must be removed while damp and thoroughly wet — never allowed to dry before washing, as dried fibres can be released during handling.

03

Label Clearly

Bags must be clearly labelled to indicate the presence of asbestos-contaminated clothing before being sent to a commercial laundering facility.

02

Place in Impermeable Bags

Place contaminated clothing directly into impermeable asbestos containers or bags. Seal and decontaminate the exterior of bags before sending.

04

Use a Suitable Facility

Only send to a commercial laundry that is equipped and trained to handle asbestos-contaminated clothing. **Never launder contaminated clothing at home.**



Further Safe Work Practice Guidance

For detailed guidance on safe work practices in the presence of asbestos-containing materials, refer to the Code of Practice: ***How to Manage and Control Asbestos in the Workplace***. This Code covers a range of specific work scenarios, including:

Building & Infrastructure

- Drilling of ACM
- Cleaning leaf litter from gutters of asbestos-cement roofs
- Replacing cabling in asbestos-cement conduits or boxes

Sealing & Coating

- Sealing, painting, and coating asbestos-cement products
- Cleaning asbestos-cement surfaces

Electrical & Mechanical

- Working on electrical mounting boards (switchboards) containing asbestos
- Inspection of asbestos friction materials



Cleaning Up After Asbestos Work

A thorough cleanup is a mandatory final step following any asbestos work or sampling activity. The work area is not considered safe for ordinary use until all decontamination steps have been completed and, for licensed removal work, a clearance certificate has been issued.

Decontaminate the Work Area

All surfaces, tools, and equipment must be decontaminated before the area is reopened. Use wet methods or asbestos-grade vacuum cleaners as appropriate.

Decontaminate Workers

All workers must go through the full personal decontamination procedure, including removal and disposal of PPE, showering, and changing into clean clothing.

Dispose of Asbestos Waste

All asbestos waste must be properly packaged, labelled, and transported to a licensed disposal facility. No waste should remain on site after work is complete.

Clearance Certificate (Licensed Work)

For all licensed removal work, a clearance certificate from a licensed asbestos assessor is required before the area can be reoccupied. This is a legal requirement.



Risk Management: Review & Report

After implementing risk controls, monitoring their effectiveness is essential. Controls that look good on paper may not work as intended in practice — regular review identifies gaps before incidents occur.

Monitor Effectiveness

- Is everyone aware of and following the current SWMS?
- Does anyone require additional training or refreshers?
- Is PPE being used consistently and correctly?
- Have there been any unexpected issues or near-misses?

Schedule a Review

- Set a specific date for reviewing asbestos management practices
- Look for opportunities for continuous improvement over time
- Assess whether controls are delivering a safer outcome

Record & Report Corrective Actions

- Document all findings and agreed corrective actions
- Assign responsibility clearly: Who will do what, by when?
- Track completion and follow up on outstanding actions



What to Do If You Suspect Asbestos Exposure

If you believe you or someone else has been exposed to asbestos fibres, act promptly. Early reporting and medical assessment are important steps in managing your long-term health.

Exposure at the Workplace

Contact your employer immediately. Your employer is obligated to take prompt action to remove the ongoing risk. If your employer does not act, contact your State or Territory safe work regulator without delay.

Exposure Outside the Workplace

Contact your local council or State/Territory environment regulator for advice on eliminating any ongoing risk to yourself and others in the area.

Medical Assessment

Arrange an appointment with your GP to discuss associated health risks and seek advice on appropriate health assessments.

National Exposure Register

Register your details on the [National Asbestos Exposure Register \(NAER\)](#) — this supports long-term health monitoring and research.

Preventing Exposure: Speak Up Before You Start

When in doubt — stop and consult.

Any time workers consider that the work they are about to undertake will disturb asbestos-containing materials, they must speak to the person with management or control of the workplace, or their health and safety representative — **before commencing work**.

If the issue cannot be resolved on site, contact the **Safe Work Regulator** for your State or Territory. No job is worth the risk of asbestos exposure.

- ❏ Never proceed with work that may disturb asbestos without first confirming that appropriate controls are in place and documented in a current SWMS.





References & Resources

For further information on asbestos management, regulations, codes of practice, and support services, the following resources are available.

Regulatory & Government Resources

- Safe Work Australia website
- SafeWork SA website
- South Australia Work Health and Safety Regulations 2012
- Code of Practice: *How to Manage and Control Asbestos in the Workplace*
- Code of Practice: *How to Safely Remove Asbestos*
- Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency: www.asbestossafety.gov.au | 1300 326 148
- South Australian Government: www.asbestos.sa.gov.au
- Australian Institute for Health and Welfare: [Mesothelioma in Australia](http://www.aihw.gov.au)

Support Groups & Community Resources

- [Asbestos Diseases Society of South Australia \(ADSSA\)](http://www.adssa.org.au)
- [Asbestos Victims Association \(SA\)](http://www.asbestosvictims.org.au)
- [Cancer Council SA](http://www.cancer.org.au)

Contact the Regulator

Email: enquiries@asbestossafety.gov.au
Phone: 1300 326 148

Remember...

Check the Register

Always consult the asbestos register before starting work at any site. Know what is present and where before you pick up any tools.

Read the SWMS

Understand the safe work method statement for asbestos before commencing work. If there isn't one — stop and report it.

If in Doubt — Stop

Never proceed if you suspect undocumented asbestos. Report it, get it assessed, and wait for clearance before continuing.

Wear Your PPE

PPE is your last line of defence. Wear it correctly, every time — and remove and dispose of it properly at the end of every shift.

THE BEST
ETY DEV
A CAREER
WORKER

Thank You — Stay Safe

Thank you for your time and commitment to workplace safety. Please carry these lessons with you — and share them with your colleagues, family, and friends.

Keep Safe at Work

Apply what you have learned today. Know your site, know your risks, and follow your management plan and SWMS every time.

Protect Your Family & Friends

Asbestos risks don't end at the workplace gate. Never bring contaminated clothing or equipment home. Talk to your family about asbestos awareness.

❏ Questions or concerns? Contact the **Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency** on 1300 326 148 or visit www.asbestossafety.gov.au

