

## **9. HANDLING OF ASBESTOS-CEMENT (FIBRO) PRODUCTS**

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A large number of building products used in the building and construction industry in Australia have been compounded from asbestos-cement. These products include, but are not limited to:

- flat or corrugated, compressed asbestos-cement sheeting (fibro)
- fibro pipes - water, drainage and flue
- roofing shingles
- flexible building boards (for example, Villaboard, Hardiflex, Wundaboard, Flexiboard)

While new fibrous-cement products no longer contain asbestos, prior to 1970 crocidolite was used in many products. Provided these products are maintained in good order, they present no health risk; however, precautions must be observed during structural alteration or demolition involving asbestos-cement materials.

- 9.1 PRECAUTIONS TO BE OBSERVED WHEN WORKING WITH ASBESTOS-CEMENT PRODUCTS
- 9.2 REMOVAL OF ASBESTOS-CEMENT (FIBRO) SHEETING

### Reference

11. National Health and Medical Research Council (NH&MRC): Code of Practice - Working with Asbestos Cement (Fibro-cement) Building Materials, NH&MRC, Canberra, 1981.

### **9.1 PRECAUTIONS TO BE OBSERVED WHEN WORKING WITH ASBESTOS-CEMENT PRODUCTS**

In general, work procedures should be designed to minimise the generation of dust and, where possible, action should be taken to avoid the spread of any asbestos dust contamination. In particular, the following practices should be adopted:

- use non-powered hand tools such as hand-saws, as these generate a smaller quantity of predominantly coarser dust or waste chips.
- wetting down the material further reduces the release of dust when cutting. High pressure water jets shall not be used.
- **POWER TOOLS UNLESS APPROVED BY THE RELEVANT STATUTORY AUTHORITY FOR ASBESTOS WORK, AND ABRASIVE CUTTING OR SANDING DISCS, IN PARTICULAR, SHALL NOT BE USED ON ASBESTOS-CEMENT PRODUCTS.**
- work with asbestos-cement products in well-ventilated areas, and where possible, in the open air.
- good work hygiene principles should be observed. This may entail the use of plastic drop sheets to collect off-cuts and coarse dust or the use of approved vacuum cleaning equipment. Where it is necessary to sweep floors, the area involved should be wetted to suppress dust.
- all off-cuts and collected dust should be disposed of as asbestos waste.
- approved respiratory protection should be used when appropriate, particularly in confined spaces.

The following precautions should be observed when removing asbestos-cement roofing, wall sheeting or other fibro products from buildings or other structures:

- all windows and doors on the building should be closed, or in factory-type buildings where there is no ceiling, the area below or adjacent to the work should be roped off.
- the asbestos-cement sheets should be sealed or wetted with water, but not with high pressure water jets. The sheets should not be wetted if this creates a high risk of a worker slipping from a roof.
- workers should wear disposable coveralls and either an approved disposable respirator or an approved half-face respirator mask fitted with dust cartridges approved for asbestos.
- only power tools approved by the appropriate statutory authority for asbestos work may be used for removal.
- asbestos-cement sheets should be removed with minimal breakage and should be lowered to the ground, not dropped.
- the removed sheets should be stacked on a ground sheet and not allowed to lie about the site where they may be further broken or crushed by machinery or site traffic.
- all asbestos-containing waste should be kept wet, wrapped in plastic or otherwise sealed and removed from the site as soon as practicable, using covered bins or on a covered truck.
- the asbestos-containing waste should be disposed of in a manner, and at a site, approved by the appropriate disposal authority. Asbestos-cement sheets should not be re-used.
- any asbestos-cement residues remaining in the roof space or around the removal area should be cleaned up, using an approved vacuum cleaner if necessary.

## WESTERN AUSTRALIA - LEGISLATION

- Health Act 1911
  - Health (Disposal of Asbestos Waste) Regulations, 1984.
- Occupational Health, Safety and Welfare Amendment Act 1987
  - Occupational Health, Safety and Welfare Amendment Act 1987 [\\*](#)
  - Occupational Health, Safety and Welfare (Workplace) Regulations 1988
  - Acts Amendment (Occupational Health, Safety and Welfare) Act 1987 [\\*](#)
- Environmental Protection Act 1986
  - Environmental Protection (Controlled Waste) Regulations 2001