

REMOVAL OF ASBESTOS CEMENT BUILDING PRODUCTS

WorkSafe Western Australia

Safe Asbestos Removal

Left undisturbed in buildings, asbestos cement (AC) building products do not present a threat to health. This has been shown by studies carried out in Western Australia and elsewhere.*

There is no need to remove or to coat asbestos cement materials because of health concerns.

If inhaled by humans, asbestos fibres can cause asbestosis, lung cancer and mesothelioma, a disease which is invariably fatal.

However, all AC building products can be removed safely and without risk to workers or the public, provided safe work procedures are complied with.



(*Report of the WA Advisory Committee on Hazardous Substances: "Asbestos Cement Building Products" August 1990.)

Hazards

A significant hazard will be created if power tools are used for cutting, drilling, sanding, grinding or sawing AC products.

Power tools must NOT be used on AC products, except for the removal of screws. Safe work procedures must be implemented and followed at all stages of removal and disposal of AC products. The use of high pressure equipment to clean materials that contain asbestos is strictly prohibited.

Although the risk to humans from installed and undisturbed AC products is negligible, surface weathering of AC products can lead to the release of asbestos fibres during removal. This is why safe work procedures must be followed.

Identifying Asbestos

Fibrous cement products in use before 1987 may contain asbestos, whereas similar building products manufactured and sold today do not contain asbestos fibres.

Careful visual inspection and microscopic examination by experienced people are the only ways of confirming whether fibrous materials contain asbestos.

Identifying, assessing and controlling hazards during AC removal and disposal should be jointly achieved through consultation and cooperation between employers and employees and, where elected, safety and health representatives.

Legislation

The safety and health of workers handling AC building products is covered by the Occupational Safety and Health Act and Regulations. Safe removal of AC products is specifically referred to in regulation 5.50. Regulation 5.50 specifically requires any work involving asbestos cement building materials at the workplace is to be done in accordance with [section 9 of the Code of Practice on Safe Removal of Asbestos \[NOHSC: 2002 \(1988\)\]](#)

brochure, as well as the Occupational Safety and Health Regulations and [Health \(Asbestos\) Regulations 1992](#).

The [Health \(Asbestos\) Regulations 1992](#), administered by the Environmental Health Branch of the Health Department, make it an offence to sell, swap, give away or supply second hand AC sheeting.

Safe Work Procedures

These safe work procedures must be followed when removing AC building products:

1. When AC building products are being removed, signs and barriers must be erected to warn of the danger and to prevent unauthorised people entering.
2. All people in the AC removal area must wear disposable coveralls and either a class P1 or P2 disposable mask.
3. AC sheets must be sprayed with a PVA (poly vinyl acetate) solution or kept wet with water during removal. Care must be taken on roofs because AC sheets are brittle and slippery when wet.
4. Non-powered hand tools or portable power tools incorporating dust suppression or dust extraction attachments designed to collect asbestos fibres must be used.
5. AC products must be removed with minimal breakage, and lowered to the ground, not dropped.
6. Removed sheets are to be stacked on polythene sheeting, then wrapped and sealed into bundles for disposal, or placed directly into disposable bins that have been lined with polythene sheeting, and sealed for disposal.
7. Sheets must not be left lying about the site where they may be further broken or crushed by machinery or site traffic.
8. When removed sheets are being stacked, care must be taken not to skid one sheet over another, as this will result in the release of fibres.
9. Roof gutters must be cleaned or sealed prior to their removal.
10. Any AC visible residue remaining in the roof space or within the removal area is to be cleaned up, using an approved vacuum cleaner if necessary.
11. All waste containing asbestos is to be kept wet, wrapped in polythene or otherwise sealed, and removed from the site as soon as practicable.
12. Used disposable coveralls and masks are to be placed in bags for removal with other asbestos waste.

Disposal and Landfill Sites

Within the metropolitan area, AC waste must be disposed of in accordance with the requirements of the Health (Asbestos) Regulations 1992.

Landfill sites that accept asbestos cement waste are listed here, however the sites should be contacted to determine conditions for disposal. Further information can also be obtained from the Department of Environmental Protection (Ph: 9222-0422).

City of Cockburn: Rockingham Road, Henderson ph 9410 2362.

City of Rockingham: Millar Road, Baldivis ph 9528 0333.

Wastestream Management: Thomas Road, Kwinana ph 9439 1300.

ACG Pty Ltd: Quinns Road, Neerabup ph 9367 9958.

City of Armadale: Hopkinson Road, Forrestdale ph 9399 0111.

Eastern Metropolitan Regional Council: Toodyay Road, Gidgeganup ph 9574 6235.

Eclipse Resources: Flynn Drive, Neerabup ph 9324 2636.

Mindarie Regional Council: Tamala Park, Marmion Drive, Mindarie ph 9305 5246.

For further information or assistance contact:

Construction and Engineering Branch

WorkSafe Western Australia
PO Box 294
West Perth 6872
Tel (08) 9327 8707

Town of East Fremantle

135 Canning Highway
East Fremantle WA 6158
Tel (08) 9339 9339
Fax (08) 9339 3399

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