

## UNEXPECTED ASBESTOS FINDS OR INCIDENTS

Most asbestos incidents happen when somebody disturbs asbestos because it hasn't been identified or suspected.

**These incidents are often:**

1. Uncontrolled;
2. Around unprotected persons; and
3. Not properly managed.

### Procedures for managing unexpected finds or incidents

#### 1. STOP WORK IMMEDIATELY

- a. LEAVE the area and alert nearby workers;
- b. REPORT the incident to your manager or Safety Manager;
- c. WORKERS or the person controlling the workplace who believe a worker or workers have or may have been exposed to asbestos or ACM must be decontaminated as soon as possible;
- d. CLOTHING must be treated as asbestos waste and disposed of in the asbestos waste bags with any disposable PPE and the wet wipes used for decontamination. Any item that can't be decontaminated such as socks must also be disposed of as asbestos waste; and
- e. WORKERS suspected of being exposed to asbestos or ACM should undertake a baseline medical examination as soon as practical after the exposure.

#### 2. INFORM WORKERS AND ISOLATE THE AREA

- a. INFORM workers to clear the workplace until the hazard has been contained;
- b. ESTABLISH a suitable exclusion zone (minimum of 10 metres) using barricades and warning signs to restrict access. The size of the zone should be based on the nature of the disturbance and advice from hygienist. Anything less than 10 metres will require asbestos air monitoring to be conducted at the exclusion zone boundary;
- c. CONSULT a licensed asbestos assessor, occupational hygienist or competent person for advice should access within the exclusion zone be unavoidable (for example for essential maintenance), prior to entering the exclusion zone;
- d. MINIMISE disturbance of the material; and
- e. WORKERS must wear minimum PPE of P2 respirator (P3 preferred), disposable coveralls and boot covers should emergency access to the exclusion zone be required.

#### 3. INSTALL WARNING SIGNS

- a. ASBESTOS warning signs must be positioned at all points of entry to the contaminated area;
- b. IF NO warning signs are onsite, use danger flags or normal warning signs as a temporary measure; and
- c. If asbestos is assumed or confirmed, warning signs should be obtained for use when asbestos or ACM is being removed or used in the case of an unexpected find.



**ENSURE** RPE and PPE (including disposable coveralls), wet wipes and asbestos waste bags on hand if exposure could be a risk.

# DON'T MESS WITH ASBESTOS

Think Smart. Think Safe. Think [asbestosawareness.com.au](http://asbestosawareness.com.au)  
Download what you need to know to manage asbestos in the workplace safely.

## 4. REPORTS TO REGULATOR

- a. EVALUATION of the incident by the Safety Manager will determine if the relevant Safety Authority should be notified such as in incidences of uncontrolled escape, spillage or leakage of asbestos; and
- b. NOTIFY the regulator immediately or within a maximum of 24 hours after becoming aware of the incident if the Safety Manager determines it is required.

## 5. ASSESSMENT, REMOVAL AND DECONTAMINATION

- a. ENGAGE a licensed asbestos assessor, occupational hygienist or competent person who will inspect, test and assess the area and the material and provide advice for remediation/decontamination; and
- b. ENGAGE a licensed asbestos removalist to safely remove the asbestos and decontaminate the area in accordance with regulations.

## 6. AIR MONITORING

- a. AIR MONITORING should be conducted by a licensed asbestos assessor, occupational hygienist or competent person with the analysis conducted by a NATA accredited testing facility.

## 7. CLEARANCE AND REOCCUPATION

- a. NO UNPROTECTED PERSONS are permitted into the affected area (except asbestos removalists) prior to a Clearance Certificate being issued; and
- b. AFTER DECONTAMINATION and air monitoring has been completed a licensed asbestos assessor, occupational hygienist or competent person can conduct a clearance inspection and issue a Clearance Certificate prior to reoccupation.



**Preventing exposure to asbestos fibres is the most effective means of preventing asbestos-related diseases.**

## Investigation and incident reporting

1. After remediation of the site has been concluded, you must conduct a thorough investigation (as soon as is reasonably practical) to learn why the incident occurred to prevent reoccurrence.
2. Circumstances to consider that may have caused the incident include:
  - a. Was the Asbestos Register and AMP up to date and made available to all workers?
  - b. Were workers adequately trained?
  - c. Did workers strictly follow safe work procedures?
  - d. Did an activity occur which allowed fibres to be transferred such as the sharing of contaminated equipment?
  - e. Is health monitoring of workers required?
3. Record the outcome of the investigation in the AMP to prevent reoccurrence. Develop corrective actions and communicate with workers.
4. If inadequate training was deemed responsible, ensure workers undergo appropriate training.
5. Review and amend the AMP as necessary based on the outcome of the investigation.
6. If it was deemed necessary by the Health and Safety Manager to notify the regulator immediately or within 24 hours following the incident; notify the regulator that the site has been remediated, that the situation was investigated and remedied (such as updating and making the Asbestos Register accessible or increasing training of workers) and if health monitoring is being conducted.
7. You may be required to provide the regulator with copies of all documents associated with the incident including results of any air monitoring and Clearance Certificates.

