



General Questions

What is the difference between friable and non-friable asbestos?

Asbestos containing material (ACM) can be categorised as friable and non-friable. Non-friable asbestos, where it is mixed with other materials like cement, is the type most commonly found in our built environment. Friable asbestos is more likely to become airborne.

Both friable and non-friable asbestos pose a significant health risk to all workers and others if the materials are not properly maintained or removed carefully.

Are asbestos-related diseases only contractible through workplace exposure?

Workplace exposure has been the most common cause of mesothelioma and other asbestos related diseases (ARDs) to date. However an increasing number of Australians are being diagnosed who do not have documented workplace exposure.

Those sufferers who were exposed to asbestos in the course of their work are often referred to as the first and second wave of asbestos sufferers. The first being those who mined, milled, manufacture or transported asbestos and the second, construction workers who were exposed during the building process.

Due to the presence of significant levels of ACMs in Australia's built environment, including many houses, those who renovate are the next group in our community who may be at risk.

Is all asbestos dangerous?

Scientific and medical evidence suggests that simply living in a building that contains asbestos is not dangerous as long as the asbestos product is in good condition; that is undamaged and undisturbed.

Asbestos cement sheeting (and other non-friable asbestos) do not pose an increased health risk as long as the products are in good condition, well maintained and are not disturbed or damaged. However, if the products become damaged or they start to deteriorate, this increases the likelihood that asbestos fibres may become airborne and it is advisable to have them stabilised and removed.

Visually inspect the materials from time to time for deterioration and damage.

What role do governments play in the regulating and management of asbestos?

Asbestos issues cut across all levels of government, and all sectors of the community. There are matters that relate to the workplace but also matters of public health and the environment. Addressing asbestos issues requires the concerted and coordinated efforts of all Australian governments.

The Australian Government is responsible for the regulation of import and export laws as they apply to asbestos, with state and territory governments carrying primary responsibility for the regulation of asbestos within their respective jurisdictions. Local governments have an important role to play in implementing state and territory regulation.





Asbestos in the home

I am thinking of renovating my house, where do I get information about asbestos?

Read this website's information on [Asbestos in the Home](#).

There are a range of other websites that also provide information about asbestos and home renovating. State, territory and local governments, unions, asbestos awareness websites and asbestos advocacy groups are an excellent source of information.

Do new building materials contain asbestos?

No, new building materials do not contain asbestos. Asbestos and all products containing asbestos have been banned throughout Australia since 31 December 2003. It is illegal to import, store, supply, sell, install, use or re-use asbestos containing products.

How do I dispose of asbestos?

Not all waste disposal facilities accept asbestos. To locate disposal facilities that accept asbestos in your area, contact your local council.

The Environmental Protection Authority in your state or territory can provide information on transporting and disposing of asbestos waste.

If asbestos containing materials are being removed from your property by a licensed asbestos removalist, they are required to dispose of them in accordance with the conditions of their licence.

Should you find any asbestos containing waste on your property or in a public area [contact your local council or the Environmental Protection Authority](#) in your state or territory.

What can I do to prevent illegal dumping of asbestos?

Illegal dumping and inappropriate disposal (where asbestos waste is concealed in general or construction waste) of asbestos is a crime which poses environmental and health risks. The cost to remediate these sites is significant and ultimately paid for by taxpayers. If you witness or suspect illegal dumping immediately report the details to the Environmental Protection Authority in your state or territory.

Where do I find a licensed asbestos removalist?

Asbestos removalists are listed in the Yellow Pages. In addition, the work health and safety regulator in your state or territory will have a list of licensed removalists on their website. If you are choosing a removalist from the Yellow Pages, ask them for a copy of their license, or contact your work health and safety regulator to confirm if they have the appropriate class of license for the job.





Asbestos in the workplace

What are the requirements for working with asbestos?

The Work Health and Safety (WHS) Regulations set out the training and competency requirements for asbestos assessors, asbestos removal workers and supervisors. Under the Regulations, two licences have been established—Class A and Class B. Businesses with a Class A licence are permitted to remove all types of asbestos, including both friable and non-friable asbestos. Businesses with a Class B licence can only remove non-friable asbestos.

The WHS Regulations also create a new license category for asbestos assessors. The role of the licensed asbestos assessor is to carry out air monitoring and clearance inspections following removal of friable asbestos.

Prior experience may be recognised when applying for a licence under the new WHS Regulations.

In addition, Safe Work Australia has developed two model Codes of Practice to provide practical guidance for persons conducting a business or undertaking who have duties under the WHS Act and WHS Regulations. These model Codes of Practice are: [How to Safely Remove Asbestos](#) and [How to Manage and Control Asbestos in the Workplace](#).

To have legal effect in a jurisdiction, the model Code of Practice must be approved as a code of practice in that jurisdiction. To determine if this model Code of Practice has been approved as a code of practice in a particular jurisdiction, contact the WHS regulator in your state or territory.

For further information on the requirements for working with asbestos under the WHS legislative framework, [contact the WHS regulator in your state or territory](#).





The National Asbestos Exposure Register

What is the National Asbestos Exposure Register?

On 3 June 2013, the Australian Government announced the establishment of the first National Asbestos Exposure Register (the Register) to be managed by the Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency when it commenced operation on 1 July 2013.

The Register is aimed at workers and members of the community who are concerned they may have been exposed to asbestos at some point, to have their details recorded in a central register. Consequently, if you believe you may have been exposed to asbestos containing materials, the Agency encourages you to register your details on the Register.

How can I access the Register?

If you think you may have been exposed to asbestos containing materials you can register your details by completing the [online registration form](#).

If you cannot complete the online registration form, please email enquiries@asbestossafety.gov.au to request an electronic form to fill out and return to the agency by the same email address or fax to: (02) 6204 2029.

What happens with the information on the Register?

The information provided by the registrant will be kept in a central database by the Australian Government and the registrant will be given a reference number to acknowledge their registration.

If the suspected exposure occurred during the course of current employment, the Agency has an obligation to notify the work health and safety regulator in the state or territory where the suspected exposure occurred. In this case, the Agency will contact the registrant and advise them of the Agency's obligations to notify the regulator.

The regulator will look at the information provided and assess whether they need to investigate the potential exposure at the workplace. The Agency will not notify or provide the employer with any information about a registrant.

Should the registrant develop an asbestos-related disease in the future, they will be able to access the details of their registration which will have recorded when they think they may have been exposed to asbestos.





Who do I call regarding asbestos issues?

Who to call

If the issue relates to a workplace or relates to work being conducted [contact the work health and safety regulator in your state or territory](#).

If the issue relates to contamination of environment or the disposal and transportation of asbestos, [contact the Environmental Protection Agency in your state or territory](#).

If you are concerned about non-work related issues such as a neighbour removing asbestos themselves, [contact your local council](#). Links to your state or territory Department of Local Government have been provided - links to individual councils can be accessed through these departmental sites.

For information relating to asbestos training providers, please visit the [Department of Industry's My Skills website](#). Links to some asbestos removal courses have been provided.

If the issue relates to public health issues, contact the [Department of Health in your state or territory](#).

