

More information

For more information, contact the WHS regulator in your state or territory, www.asbestossafety.gov.au/contacts

Comcare (CTH)

www.comcare.gov.au 1300 366 979

WorkSafe ACT

www.accesscanberra.act.gov.au 13 22 81

SafeWork NSW

www.safework.nsw.gov.au 13 10 50

WorkSafe Victoria

www.worksafe.vic.gov.au 1800 136 089

NT WorkSafe

www.worksafe.nt.gov.au 1800 019 115

Workplace Health & Safety QLD

www.worksafe.qld.gov.au 1300 362 128

SafeWork SA

www.safework.sa.gov.au 1300 365 255

WorkSafe Tasmania

www.worksafe.tas.gov.au (03) 6166 4600

WorkSafe WA

www.commerce.wa.gov/worksafe 1300 307 877



Australian Government
Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency



Information for those arranging an asbestos assessment



This information has been jointly developed by the Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency and the Victorian Asbestos Eradication Agency.

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This information has been developed to assist those arranging an asbestos assessment (commonly referred to as an inspection, audit or survey) to understand what is involved and provide information on what can be expected from the process.

Who might need to arrange an assessment

If you are the person with management or control of a workplace, it is your responsibility to arrange an asbestos assessment. It is important that you:

- ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that all asbestos or asbestos-containing material (ACM) at the workplace is identified by a competent person
- ensure that an asbestos register is prepared and kept at the workplace.

Who can undertake the assessment for me

If you are in the ACT, all asbestos assessments must be carried out by a licensed asbestos assessor. In all other states and territories, asbestos assessment work must be carried out by a competent person.

A competent person means a person who has acquired training, qualifications or experience and therefore has the knowledge and skills to carry out the task.

A competent person should be:

- trained and experienced in taking asbestos samples
- knowledgeable and experienced in identifying asbestos
- able to determine the risk and the action that should be taken
- familiar with building and construction methods to identify where asbestos is likely to be.

Professionals who may meet this definition include:

- Occupational Hygienists who have experience with asbestos
- Licensed Asbestos Assessors
- individuals who have undertaken a recognised training course in asbestos identification.

What can I expect from the asbestos assessment process

1. Gathering background information

The competent person conducting the assessment (the assessor) will speak with you and others with knowledge of the workplace to find out any relevant background information before beginning their assessment. This may include:

- finding out information about the building/structures and its age/when it was built
- any known details about its construction
- the history of the site and any known information about its past uses
- gathering and reviewing copies of previous asbestos registers, management plans and other documentation associated with previous removal (including clearance certificates).

Is there standard template/register format you can provide

If your organisation has a standard asbestos register template used across multiple sites, it is important that you let your assessor know before they start the audit so they can take this requirement into account during their preparation work.

The reason some organisations will use a standard template is to ensure consistency in how information is collected and recorded, allowing for easy comparison and consolidation of registers across multiple sites.

2. Conduct a physical audit

The assessor will conduct a physical audit of the workplace, including areas that have limited access (such as locked areas). You can expect that this will include both internal and external areas, following a consistent and methodical approach determined by the assessor prior to commencement.

3. Take samples of suspected ACMs

The assessor should take physical samples of suspected ACMs for laboratory analysis to confirm whether the suspected materials contain asbestos. Some intrusive sampling may be required – your assessor should consult with you about this and arrange prior approval where this is the case.

Why do samples need to be taken

The only way to confirm the presence of asbestos is to have a sample analysed by a National Association of Testing Authorities (NATA) accredited laboratory. It is often not possible to determine whether material contains asbestos just by looking at it. Despite this, there may be some circumstances where your assessor may be confident in making a determination that something is likely to contain asbestos in the absence of sampling for common materials where there are indications of it being a specific product known to contain asbestos (for example, James Hardie fibro cement sheeting with stamped product codes).

In the absence of sampling, material must be ‘assumed’ as containing asbestos and must be treated as if it does. While there is an initial cost associated with having samples analysed, the requirements to manage assumed ACMs over time are likely to outweigh these initial costs. These costs include specific monitoring, management and removal by a licensed asbestos removalist. Sampling to confirm/deny the presence of asbestos may mean these costs can be avoided if the material is confirmed to not contain asbestos.

4. Preparing the report and associated documents

Depending on the purpose for getting an assessment, your assessor will provide you with a report, and may provide you with an asbestos register and a management plan.

Asbestos register

An asbestos register is a document that lists all identified (or assumed) asbestos in a workplace. At a minimum, it should include:

- date
- details on the location, type and condition of the asbestos
- sampling and analysis results
- details of any inaccessible areas/areas not assessed
- photographs of material, noting location and condition.

The asbestos register should be accessible and provided to (at a minimum) those undertaking work at the site and health and safety representatives. The purpose of the register is to inform others of the location and condition of ACMs to avoid the risk of disturbance, which could result in potential exposure of workers and others present to dangerous asbestos fibres.

The register should be reviewed at least once every five years or when:

- additional ACMs are identified
- the asbestos management plan is reviewed
- previously identified ACMs are removed, disturbed, sealed or enclosed.

It is important that where possible, ACMs are labelled to indicate the presence and location of asbestos.

Asbestos management plan

An asbestos management plan sets out how ACMs identified at the workplace will be managed – including what, when and how it will be done. At a minimum, it should include:

- details of the identified ACMs, including reference to the asbestos register and the location of signs and labels
- the decisions (and reasons) about how ACMs will be managed – for example, details on safe work procedures and control measures in place
- procedures for detailing accidents, incidents or emergencies involving ACMs at the workplace

- details of workers who may carry out work involving ACMs, including details on consultation and training requirements
- a timetable for managing risks, including dates for review and any schedules for removal
- identifying and assigning responsibility
- details of any air monitoring procedures that may be required.

The asbestos management plan should be accessible and provided to (at a minimum) those undertaking work at the site and health and safety representatives.

The plan should be reviewed at least once every five years or when:

- there is a review of the asbestos register or a control measure
- previously identified ACMs are removed, disturbed, sealed or enclosed
- the plan is no longer adequate for managing ACMs present
- a health and safety representative requests a review if they reasonably believe that it is not adequate to protect the health and safety of a member of their work group.

5. Communicating the results/outcomes

You can expect the assessor to go through the report and documents provided with you to make sure you have a clear understanding of what is included and what you should do in response.

It is important that you understand any limitations of the assessment, including the fact there may be areas that the assessor has not accessed (often due to physical restrictions). It is important to note that in the absence of inspection and testing, these areas need to be presumed as containing ACMs.

If you have any questions or there is anything you are unsure about, it is important that you seek clarification from the person who undertook the assessment and prepared the documents.