



Submission Template | Asbestos Safety Training Options for Workers Entering Trades

Submission from: **Anonymous**

Responses to questions posed:

1. Do you agree that asbestos awareness training is required *before* apprentices are at any risk of asbestos exposure? If so, what training do apprentices need?

This is absolutely essential. Whilst Asbestos has been around for many years, younger apprentices and school aged students would generally have no knowledge of it's existence or the risks associated with it.

Apprentices should be given accredited training on, at a minimum, asbestos identification, the difference between friable and non-friable asbestos and general safety precautions. Any training provider must be approved by the relevant State/Territory Safety Authority, and cover National standard requirements in each course. The minimum course could be completed in 4-5 hours.

Things to include would be how to identify buildings/products that may contain asbestos (for buildings design and structural indicators of age), including factors such as when builds were completed etc.

2. While all WHS laws impose duties on PCBUs (or equivalents) to provide training, they are not prescriptive about what training needs to be undertaken or who can provide that training, apart from the ACT. Do these laws provide adequate protection to workers at risk of being exposed to asbestos? If not, how could they be improved?

In my experience the majority of PCBU's in the building industry tend to teach on the job, noting most of these are small business and not large corporates. They accept refurbishment or demolition works based on a simple quote – and they themselves in most instances have no idea or training associated with Asbestos. They of course know it may be present, however their focus is on the job at hand, making money now and not thinking about the longer term impacts on themselves or their employees.

Training on asbestos must be mandated for all workers in any building, automotive or demolition related industries. Training should be refreshed every 24 months, and ideally courses should be cost effective for PCBU's to ensure greater compliance – particularly for small businesses. Training records should be inspected randomly by State Safety Authorities or Industry bodies.



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Training should be competency based in that images should be provided and suspected products should have to be identified by the person being assessed. Perhaps some background information provided, e.g. AC Sheeting from 1985 vs Cement sheeting from 2017.

3. In your state or territory do the current asbestos training provisions in WHS regulations and codes provide enough information to determine what 'suitable and adequate' training means for asbestos related jobs?

No. We have recently organised training through an expert Asbestos provider for all of our Facilities staff.

4. If further prescription about training is desirable, are there particular occupations which should be targeted (see for example the list at Appendix 1 setting out the occupations listed under the ACT legislative scheme).

As indicated anyone in the building, automotive, demolition industries; as well as anyone who does things like home handyman type work. 'Backyarders' are the ones that often are most at risk, and create risk for others – not intentionally, but due to their lack of awareness and knowledge. Their focus is the dollar now, not the health impacts in future or the environmental risks they are creating.

5. Is nationally recognised training generally preferable to non-accredited courses to meet PCBU duties for workers entering trades who may be exposed to asbestos? Why?

Absolutely. Non-accredited courses have no minimum standards, which can result in rushed programs that may not address the issues at hand. There are unfortunately a lot of training businesses that simplify and reduce content to complete an accelerated program to minimise impact on business by taking their staff away for longer periods. This is dangerous and unless a minimum content and time for a program is set, the training may be of no benefit.

6. Do some PCBUs find choosing asbestos training difficult given the range of choice and the need to ensure training meets duties under WHS laws? Why? Do small businesses face any particular challenges in this regard?

Absolutely. Small businesses in particular struggle as they have cost impacts both for the provision of training and taking their staff away – thus reducing their income.

There are a multitude of training providers out there offering very similar content for various amounts and times. As indicated above, a small business will choose the cheapest and least time consuming program in every instance to tick a box.

Many of the courses offered give nothing more than an attendance certificate, and have no competency requirement – which renders them useless.

7. Which of the options at 6.1 – 6.5, if any, do you support or not support and why? (You may wish to rank the options in order of preference).



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6.4 and 6.5 would be the best. Asbestos awareness training should be mandatory for all industries indicated above. Training providers should be approved by the respective Authorities to ensure quality control and standards are met. As indicated these sessions need to be half or full day and include competency assessment that explores various avenues. The cost of these programs should be minimised where possible, or even subsidised, to ensure smaller operators commit – rather than going about their business hoping not to be caught out.

8. Are there other levers which could be used to ensure all workers entering trades who may be exposed to asbestos receive adequate asbestos safety training?

Any TAFE or similar courses in trades should have mandated content, as this will allow employers to cover their initial requirement and have greater faith in the course content. The employer will then only have to cover the refresher course every 2 years.

Employers should have to put new workers/apprentices through a suite of minimum safety courses before their first day on the job. This should include White Card, Manual Handling, Asbestos, Plant and Equipment, risk identification and control and Chemical safety at a minimum.

9. Are there any other issues you would like to comment on regarding the adequacy of asbestos safety training especially for workers entering trades where they may be exposed to asbestos?

The training must be conducted prior to any worker being allowed on site. It only takes one exposure to potentially impact health. Lack of awareness is dangerous. Apprentices and new employees must have to go through a specific industry standard induction program before setting foot on site.