



UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA

## ASBESTOS PROCEDURES

### OVERVIEW

The University of Tasmania is committed to continuously improving the management and standards of Occupational Health and Safety. This commitment extends to minimising the potential for employees and contractors to be exposed to airborne respirable asbestos fibres. The University will make every effort to identify, inspect, maintain and keep a register of asbestos on its property.

### DEFINITIONS

#### Accountable Person:

An individual, who assumes responsibility for the health or welfare of any other person in a workplace by providing instruction, direction, assistance, advice or service, is deemed an Accountable Person in accordance with the *Workplace Health and Safety Regulations 1998*. All management and supervisory staff (which includes those with responsibility for students) are therefore considered "Accountable Persons".

#### Asbestos:

Asbestos is the common name given to a number of inorganic fibrous silicate minerals that fall into two main classes, namely:

- Serpentine: Chrysotile (white)
- Amphiboles: Amosite (brown)  
Anthophyllite (white)  
Crocidolite (blue)

#### Employee:

For the purposes of this procedure, employee refers to any University of Tasmania staff member.

#### Contractor:

For the purposes of this procedure a contractor is any person engaged by the University of Tasmania to perform work for gain or reward other than an employee.

#### Responsible Officer:

Deans, Heads of Division, Heads of School and Administrative Sections have been designated as Responsible Officers under the *Workplace Health & Safety Act 1995*.

### RESPONSIBILITIES

#### Accountable Persons:

Accountable Persons need to ensure that employees are able to undertake activities involving contact with asbestos safely by implementing this procedure. Where an employee is required to supervise asbestos-related activities, the Accountable Person is responsible for ensuring that delegated safety responsibilities are fulfilled and that appropriate supervision is provided. Accountable Persons must also ensure that appropriate records relating to asbestos-related activities are kept.

Accountable Persons must ensure all employees and contractors are made aware of the location of any asbestos or asbestos containing products that they may disturb or come into contact with and that they have access to any relevant workplace asbestos monitoring results.

#### **Employees and Contractors:**

Whilst undertaking any asbestos-related activity, employees and contractors are required to do so in a manner which does not adversely affect their own health and safety, or that of others. They must immediately report to the Accountable Person any matter which may affect their own or others' health and safety. In addition to the above, employees and contractors must specifically:

- Notify the Asbestos Co-ordinator(s) of any identified asbestos or suspected asbestos containing products not included on an Asbestos Register.
- Ensure that any work involving the possibility of exposure to airborne respirable asbestos fibre is carried out according to this procedure.
- Wear personal protective equipment as required.

#### **Responsible Officers:**

Responsible Officers need to ensure that where asbestos-related activities are undertaken this procedure is implemented within their area of responsibility. Ensure that School/Section specific guidelines are developed where necessary, and that they are consistent with the information contained in this document.

#### **Physical Resources:**

- Take all reasonable steps to identify asbestos and asbestos containing products within University of Tasmania buildings and structures
- Ensure that risk assessments are undertaken and records kept on the potential exposure to airborne respirable asbestos fibres of any employee working with or in areas containing asbestos or asbestos containing products
- Ensure that measures are implemented to minimise the potential for employees and contractors to be exposed to airborne respirable asbestos fibres
- Ensure that employees and contractors are made aware of all asbestos on site that they could be exposed to, and the location of the Asbestos Register (Attachment 1)
- Ensure that information is available and that all asbestos bearing structures have been appropriately labelled
- Nominate Asbestos Co-ordinator(s) for each University of Tasmania workplace.

#### **Asbestos Co-ordinator(s):**

- Responsible for the authorisation and co-ordination of asbestos work and distribution of information within that workplace.
- Shall maintain an Asbestos Register (Attachment 1) of all asbestos on a University of Tasmania workplace.
- Ensure that all asbestos on any University of Tasmania workplace under their responsibility is inspected regularly and results recorded in the Asbestos Register.
- Ensure that in the event of demolition work involving asbestos or asbestos containing materials that the contractor notifies the Director of Workplace Standards Tasmania of the presence of asbestos.
- Ensure the Director of Workplace Standards Tasmania is notified in writing of the intention to remove asbestos.

## **BACKGROUND**

Asbestos fibres only pose a significant risk to health if airborne. Due to its physical and chemical properties, asbestos has been used as a heat and fire insulator and/or fire resistant medium. These properties, together with its mechanical strength and stability, enable asbestos to be integrated very effectively as a filler, binder or reinforcement with other materials.

The following are some typical products containing asbestos:

- woven asbestos products – cloth, webbing, tape, gloves;

- asbestos cement building materials – corrugated sheets, flat sheets, pipe, gutters, moulded products, floor sheets, chimney flues;
- fire doors;
- electrical switchboards;
- gaskets and asbestos paper;
- insulation blocks;
- asbestos insulated cable;
- floor tiles and tile adhesives;
- anti-friction materials;
- pipe lagging.

## **PROCEDURE**

### **Notification**

Employees and contractors who perform maintenance or repairs must be made aware of the location of asbestos in the work area and suitable precautions must be taken.

All asbestos identified, and work with the potential for exposure to airborne respirable asbestos fibres, must be notified to an Asbestos Co-ordinator.

### **Asbestos Co-ordinator(s)**

Physical Resources will nominate an Asbestos Co-ordinator(s). The nominated person(s) will have expertise in asbestos work and removal or will undertake suitable training.

The Asbestos Co-ordinator shall ensure that a job risk assessment is completed for all work involving asbestos and recorded in the Asbestos Register (Attachment 1).

The Asbestos Co-ordinator shall ensure that all asbestos and asbestos containing products are regularly inspected to determine the condition of the material. The results and date of each inspection shall be recorded in the Asbestos Register. Where the condition of the material has deteriorated, steps shall be taken to remove the asbestos material or if this is not practicable, minimise the release of the airborne respirable asbestos fibres.

### **Asbestos Register**

The University of Tasmania shall compile an asbestos register. The asbestos register should be accessible to employees who may be at risk from exposure to airborne respirable asbestos fibres.

All relevant data from visual inspections or measurements of airborne respirable asbestos shall be systematically recorded in the appropriate Asbestos Register.

When new asbestos material is identified or eliminated, the amendment will be entered in the appropriate Asbestos Register.

### **Assessment**

A project risk assessment must be undertaken for all works involving the disturbance of asbestos or asbestos containing materials. Risk assessments must be completed with the participation of relevant professionals where appropriate, and employees and contractors required to work near or with the asbestos. Steps involved in the assessment will include:

- Review of relevant information about the asbestos; for example location, type, condition, quantity
- Identifying the risks and assessing the adequacy of controls of work situations with the potential for employees to be exposed to airborne respirable asbestos fibres
- Monitoring of the atmosphere for exposure to airborne respirable asbestos fibres as appropriate.

A thorough evaluation of the work practices and asbestos removal techniques will be necessary.

The completed project risk assessment forms and any additional information must be forwarded to an Asbestos Co-ordinator prior to work commencing.

## Control

Removal of asbestos material should be the priority where there is a substantial risk of exposure to airborne respirable asbestos fibres. Licensed asbestos removalists must be used to perform removal work.

Wherever the risk assessment indicates a low risk of exposure to airborne respirable asbestos fibres, the asbestos containing item(s) may be left in situ.

Sealing or enclosure of existing asbestos may further minimise the potential for exposure to airborne respirable asbestos fibres. Approved sealants must be used.

Wherever practicable, asbestos removal works shall have access limited to authorised contractors only. In conjunction with isolation, consideration shall be given to each of the following control measures (in priority order), engineering controls, safe work practices, administration and personal protective equipment.

The measures implemented must ensure that no employee, contractor or visitor is exposed to airborne respirable asbestos fibres which exceed the exposure standards.

All control actions recommended shall be referred to Physical Resources for implementation. An Asbestos Co-ordinator shall verify that the controls have been implemented.

## Signposting/identifying of material containing asbestos

All materials containing asbestos shall be conspicuously labelled in accordance with *AS 1216 – 1995 Class labels for asbestos*. All asbestos removal work shall be conspicuously signed in accordance with *AS 1319 – 1994 Safety signs for the occupational environment*. Signs shall be located in the work area and barricades erected before removal work can safely commence.

## Monitoring

Workplace monitoring, where required shall be conducted by a competent person in accordance with Worksafe Australia Asbestos Code of Practice. Results of any monitoring shall be recorded in the Asbestos Register. Monitoring results shall be made available to all employees potentially exposed to airborne respirable asbestos fibres. A copy of all monitoring results must be forwarded to the Occupational Health & Safety Unit.

In addition to the numerical results of measurements, and the calculated time-weighted averages, the monitoring data shall include information such as:

- the date and exact time of inspection or sampling
- the names of the persons conducting the sampling and analytical determinations
- recommendations made or advice given
- sampling instrument used, its accessories and the method of analysis
- the location, nature, dimensions and other distinctive features of the workplace where static measurements were made, and the workstation or position filled by any person wearing a sampling device
- the source or sources of airborne asbestos emission, their location and the type of work and operations being performed during sampling
- the composition and trade names (if known) of materials containing asbestos
- relevant information on the functioning of the process, engineering controls, ventilation and weather conditions in respect to emission of asbestos dust
- the duration of the employee's or contractor's exposure, and other comments relating to the exposure evaluation

All maintenance, repair and removal of asbestos works and locations where there is a significant risk of exposure to airborne respirable fibres shall be monitored regularly.

## Waste Disposal

Materials contaminated by asbestos removal work and asbestos materials shall be removed and disposed of by a competent operator at a licensed refuse disposal site in a manner which prevents the release of asbestos.

## Respiratory Protection

Respiratory protective equipment used in asbestos removal must conform to *Australian Standard/New Zealand Standard 1715-1994, Selection, use and maintenance of respiratory protective devices*.

## Incidents/Accidents

All incidents or accidents involving potential exposure to airborne respirable asbestos fibres shall be reported to an Asbestos Co-ordinator immediately. An investigation shall be carried out immediately to identify the causes and controls implemented to prevent recurrence, contain contamination and minimise further exposure to airborne respirable asbestos fibres.

## REFERENCES

This Procedure has been developed in reference to the following documents:

- *Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995*
- *Workplace Health and Safety Regulations 1998*
- *AS/NZS 1715-1994, Selection, use and maintenance of respiratory protective devices*
- *AS/NZS 1716:1994, Respiratory protective devices*
- *Safety Bulletin No.7, Asbestos – Safe Removal and Disposal in Industry*
- *Worksafe Australia, Asbestos, Code of Practice [NOHSC:2002(1988)], Guidance Notes [NOHSC: 3002 (1988)] [NOHSC: 3003 (1988)]*
- *Worksafe Australia, Exposure Standards for Atmospheric Contaminants in the Occupational Environment*
- *AS 1319-1994, Safety signs for the occupational environment*
- *AS 1216 – 1995, Class labels for asbestos*

Approved by OH&S Committee : 14<sup>th</sup> September, 2000

## Disclaimer

This Procedure was designed for use within the University of Tasmania. The University makes no guarantee and assumes no responsibility as to the absolute correctness for all circumstances or for the adaptation outside the University of Tasmania environment.



