



Asbestos

REMOVAL OR DISTURBANCE of Asbestos Containing Material I N S C H O O L S

What is asbestos?

Asbestos is a naturally occurring mineral rock which is made up of mineral silicate fibres. These fibres belong to either the serpentine or amphibole mineral groups. The three main types of asbestos are –

Chrysotile	“white” asbestos – belonging to the serpentine group
Crocidolite	“blue” asbestos – belonging to the amphibole group
Amosite	“brown” or “grey” asbestos – belonging to the amphibole group

Asbestos is known for its strength and resistance to chemicals and heat. These properties resulted in asbestos becoming a component of thousands of different products. The range of applications included reinforcing in asbestos-cement sheeting, as an insulator on pipes and in buildings and as a fire retardant in a variety of products and materials.

Asbestos Containing Material (ACM) was used in a variety of workplaces from the 1940s up until the early 1980s when the dangers to health inherent in exposure became more widely acknowledged.

Asbestos Containing Material (ACM) is now used as a ‘catch-all’ term in the legislation and Codes of Practice. Asbestos Containing Material means any material, object, product or debris containing asbestos.

Why is asbestos a risk?

Inhalation of asbestos fibres has been linked to three respiratory diseases - asbestosis, mesothelioma and lung cancer. Exposure may also relate to other cancers, however, there is no conclusive evidence to support these concerns. The three identified diseases are characterised by long latency periods, that is, 20-40 years from exposure to asbestos to the onset of disease.

Where might asbestos be located in a school?

Asbestos in its most dangerous forms has been removed from schools. However, there are still some asbestos containing materials present in many existing facilities. These materials represent a minimal risk if undisturbed.

Your school may still have ACM:

- ▶ insulating boards used for fire protection, thermal insulation, partitioning and ducts;
- ▶ some ceiling tiles;
- ▶ vinyl or thermoplastic floor tiles
- ▶ asbestos cement products (the most common asbestos material in schools)

ACM includes asbestos-cement sheeting, gutters, downpipes and ridge capping. Asbestos-cement sheeting can be flat (e.g. internal cladding) or corrugated (e.g. roof sheeting) and is often referred to as “fibro”. ACM was commonly used in the building industry between the 1940s and early 1980s.

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Do schools know where asbestos materials are located at their school?

Q-Build (Department of Public Works) coordinate an Asbestos Program for all EQ schools. Schools where asbestos containing materials have been identified will have an asbestos register known as the *Building Management Plan* which identifies the location and type of asbestos containing material.

As part of the ongoing QBuild Asbestos Management Program, EQ's Facilities Services Branch has been liaising with QBuild on practical ways to maintain the currency of the register of asbestos containing material in schools. In addition to the Schools' Building Management Plan, QBuild has a central or master register. It is intended that this central register will be maintained as the prime data source. Processes will be developed to ensure that this register is updated as ACM is removed or on the disposal of buildings containing asbestos. School registers will also be updated with any change of circumstance.

Who should remove asbestos materials from schools?

Schools must comply with the [Directive On School Maintenance And Other Works](#) sent by the Deputy-Director General, Education Queensland on 7 April 2005 and departmental procedure *FCM – PR – 003: Management of Asbestos Products in Schools*.

Usually asbestos removal will occur under the management or supervision of QBuild, either as a specific project or as part of maintenance or refurbishment projects. QBuild will update the registers as part of these activities.

There may be instances where school funded initiatives involve the removal or disturbance of ACM. Although the Building Management Plan details the processes to be followed during removal or disturbance of asbestos, the school should seek the advice and assistance of QBuild through the Client Relations Officer before proceeding with any work. As well as providing technical support to the school this officer will ensure the necessary updating of the registers upon completion. **Schools should be mindful that relatively 'minor' works could involve areas where ACM is present.**

Removal or disturbance of ACM should be avoided. If removal or disturbance of ACM is necessary, then the Regional Facilities Manager **must** be contacted and they will arrange for QBuild or an accredited contractor to undertake the work.

What should schools do if any staff believe they have been exposed to asbestos?

Schools should refer to the [Flowchart for Managing Asbestos Incidents](#) to ensure appropriate services and support can be provided to staff and the school community. Following this process will ensure that the appropriate people are advised of the incident and that a coordinated approach can be organised for the school.

If an employee is experiencing health problems the first step should always be to encourage the employee to seek medical treatment. Employees may lodge a 'WorkCover Application for Compensation' form for injury or notification purposes. The process for lodging these forms is explained in the flowchart.

More Information:

- ▶ *FCM – PR – 003: Management of Asbestos Products in Schools*
<http://iwww.qed.qld.gov.au/strategic/epr/facility/fcmpr003/>
- ▶ *Flowchart for Managing Asbestos Incidents -*
<http://iwww.qed.qld.gov.au/strategic/epr/facility/fcmpr003/attach7.pdf>
- ▶ *Directive on School Maintenance and Other Works*
<http://iwww.qed.qld.gov.au/office/dg/apr2005sui.html>
- ▶ Code of Practice for the Management and Control of Asbestos in Workplaces April 2005 - National Occupational Health and Safety Commission (NOHSC)
<http://www.ascc.gov.au/NR/rdonlyres/DB7C0238-F1D3-4EDE-B444-F7B751CE83FE/0/ManagementCode.pdf>
- ▶ *Asbestos Management and Control Policy for Government Buildings (DPW)*
http://publicworks.govnet.qld.gov.au/asbestos/00_downloads/asbestos_policy_full.pdf