

Managing Asbestos Emergencies



Overview

Asbestos emergencies occur when asbestos is discovered unexpectedly and prompt action needs to be taken.

Examples of asbestos 'emergencies'

- Asbestos discovered unexpectedly during trade activities such as plumbing, electrical work, renovations, demolition activities, excavating soil or digging trenches, removing carpet and finding vinyl tiles underneath, working in previously inaccessible areas, etc.
- Asbestos products being removed from nearby properties and airborne dust contaminating the school site
- Property damage when asbestos products are disturbed or after fires
- Illegal dumping of asbestos products or asbestos contaminated soil on school property.

Initial response

If asbestos is discovered or suspected, prompt action needs to be taken:

- **Cease activities** in the area
- **Do not touch** the material
- **Remove people** from the area
- **Assume the material contains asbestos** until the material has been properly identified
- **Close windows and turn off air conditioning** if asbestos dust could be present
- **Notify the Principal** and appoint a person to manage the situation
- If safe to do so, **isolate the area** with signage and barricades
- **Inform staff**, the community and legislative/regulatory bodies (if applicable) as required.

Gather information

- **Seek advice** from one or more of the following:
 - An asbestos auditor, occupational hygienist or a licensed asbestos removalist
 - An OHS Advisor at the CECV IR Unit on (03) 9267 0431
- Check the school's **Asbestos Register** to see if there is any relevant information.



Asbestos removal

- If asbestos is present, arrange for a licensed asbestos removalist to **remove it**
- For further detailed information refer to the CECV OHS guidelines on Managing the Removal of Asbestos.

Documentation

- Complete an incident report
- Document any investigations
- Update the school's asbestos register
- Keep records of internal/external communications and any actions taken.

Resources

- Asbestos Management
- Managing the Removal of Asbestos
- Sample Asbestos Register
- Removing asbestos in workplaces (WorkSafe Compliance Code)
- Licensed asbestos removalists (WorkSafe)
- www.asbestos.com.au