

# ASBESTOS ALERT

Stop. Think asbestos. Seek advice.

Asbestos awareness



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## What is asbestos?

Asbestos is a naturally occurring fibrous form of mineral silicates belonging to the serpentine or amphibole groups of rock-forming minerals, including amosite (brown asbestos), chrysotile (white asbestos) and crocidolite (blue asbestos).

There are two main forms of asbestos, friable (Class A) and non-friable (Class B).

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## Living with asbestos

Asbestos cement material has been widely used as a building product in both the public and private sectors.

In the Northern Territory, many schools were constructed using asbestos cement material, specifically in walls, ceilings, roofs, eaves, fire doors, floor tiles and in mechanical services plant rooms.

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## Uses of asbestos

- Building materials such as sheeting for walls, ceilings, roofs, fencing, vinyl floor tiles;
- Brake linings;
- Gaskets;
- Fire Proofing (fire blankets and fire doors);
- Insulation.



## Health risks

- Small asbestos fibrous particles may be inhaled and enter the lungs
- **Asbestosis** fibrosis of the lung, i.e. scarring or scar tissue
- **Mesothelioma** cancers of the pleura and peritoneum
- Development of asbestos related disease symptoms may occur years after exposure
- Latency period of 10-50 years.

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## **Soil and land fill**

Prior to asbestos being classified as hazardous it was dumped as normal waste. As a result asbestos fragments are commonly found in soil and land fill.

Asbestos is not hazardous whilst it remains undisturbed.



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## Cyclone Tracy

As a result of the damage to buildings caused by Cyclone Tracy, small asbestos containing material debris is being found in some school grounds due in part to heavy rains uncovering the debris.



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## Current issues

Within schools, staff, students and others may be placed at risk of asbestos exposure due to:

- Poor work practices mainly undertaken by some maintenance personnel and contractors; and
- Damage being caused by activities or vandalism disturbing existing asbestos containing materials.





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## Asbestos cement sheeting debris



Asbestos  
pieces lying on  
the ground



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## Asbestos vinyl floor tiles

Badly damaged  
vinyl floor tiles  
containing  
asbestos fibres



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## Minor work in school ablutions

Minor work in  
school  
ablution  
blocks  
exposing  
asbestos  
cement wall  
sheeting



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## Damaged asbestos wall sheeting

Damage to  
asbestos cement  
wall sheet  
caused by minor  
works exposing  
asbestos cement  
fibres



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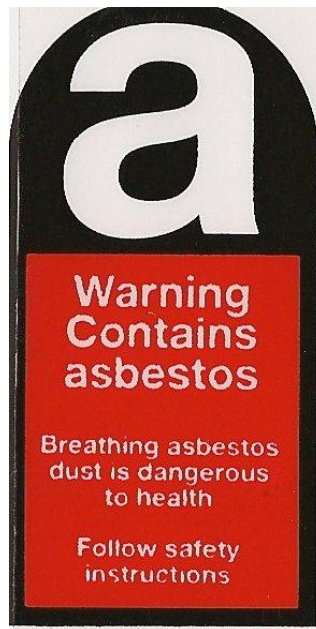
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## Asbestos warning labels

Warning labels indicating the presence of asbestos in the area.



asbestos  
label



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## Northern Territory legislation

### [Work Health and Safety \(National Uniform Legislation\) Act](#)

- Section 19 outlines the duty of care of all persons
- [NT WorkSafe Code of Practice on How to Safely Remove Asbestos](#)
- [NT WorkSafe Code of Practice on How to Manage and Control Asbestos in the Workplace](#)



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# Northern Territory legislation

## Work Health and Safety (National Uniform Legislation) Regulations

- Regulation 452 – Asbestos in buildings or structures (demolition work)
- Chapter 8, specifically Part 8.7, outlines the requirements in regard to asbestos removal
- Part 8.10 – Licence required to perform certain work



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## **Roles and responsibilities**

### **Building owner (DECS)**

Must ensure compliance with a regulation that relates to the condition, provision and maintenance of the fixture or fitting at the workplace.





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## **Roles and responsibilities**

### **Building occupier (school)**

Must ensure compliance with a Work Health and Safety (National Uniform Legislation) Regulation that relates to:

- The condition of a building or structure at; and
- Access to, and egress from the workplace.



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# Roles and responsibilities

## Employer

Shall ensure that the Work Health and Safety (National Uniform Legislation) Regulations are complied with in respect to the health and safety of a worker and of any other person who could be adversely affected.



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# Roles and responsibilities

## Employees

Shall report to the person in charge of the workplace (Principal or Acting Principal), a situation that may present a risk to the health and safety to the workers or other persons at the workplace.



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# Roles and responsibilities

## Contractors

Must comply with Work Health and Safety (National Uniform Legislation) Regulations in respect to:

- their own health and safety; and
- the health and safety of any other person who may be affected by their work.



## Roles and responsibilities

### Principals

- Sight the scope of works
- Confirm contractor is aware of asbestos
- Ascertain type of work to be undertaken and identify if a licensed asbestos removalist is required (Part 8.10 of Regulations refers)
- View the contractors copy of [Notification of asbestos removal](#) completed and lodged form

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## Who to Contact for Advice

The Department of Business provides advice on Occupational Health and Safety for government agencies, including DECS.

**DECS Senior Project Officer,**  
Repairs and Maintenance – School Buildings  
8901 4928



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## Identifying asbestos

- Look for an asbestos label on wall/ceiling sheets;
- Refer to the asbestos register;
- Contact a specialist for advice;
- If unsure, treat the material as containing asbestos.

**Note:** You can't tell whether a material contains asbestos simply by looking at it.

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## **School Maintenance Contractors**

- Use the asbestos checklist for minor works
- Don't work where there is any risk of exposure to children prior to the job being completed
- Do not expose others
- Do not use power tools
- Use protective equipment
- Don't drop or break asbestos sheeting
- Clean up thoroughly using approved equipment





## School Maintenance Contractors

The following Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), as a minimum, must be worn by persons working with asbestos:

- a P1, P2 or P3 filter type particle respirator/mask (refer Appendix B of the NT Code of Practice on [How to Safely Remove Asbestos](#));
- disposable coveralls;
- disposable gloves; and
- safety footwear.

Approved plastic bags for disposal of asbestos and worn PPE must be used.

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# School Maintenance Contractors

## Cleaning Up

- Asbestos cement residue in the work area should be cleaned up by wet wiping
- an approved vacuum cleaner may need to be used, this must be a 3 micron HEPA vacuum cleaner with a two-stage filtering system with a disposable bag as approved under Australian Standard 3544.



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## Disposal of Asbestos

- Thoroughly wet and maintain asbestos in a wet condition until packaged for correct disposal.
- Completely wrap the asbestos in two layers of polythene sheeting (approx 0.2mm thick)
- Seal all plastic edges with ducting tape.
- Label the packages with a warning sign about 75mm x 90mm, stating: Caution: asbestos.  
Do not open or damage bag, do not inhale dust.
- Contact your local council or the Department of Lands, Planning and the Environment on (08) 8924 4041.



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## Further information

**Department of Education and Children's Services**  
Senior Project Officer, Repairs and Maintenance –  
School Buildings  
8901 4928

**NT WorkSafe**  
[www.worksafe.nt.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.nt.gov.au)  
1800 019 115