

INFORMATION SHEET 4

# MANAGING ASBESTOS

**Where there is a significant hazard to employees, an asbestos hazard must be managed in a hierarchy of elimination, isolation or minimisation.**

## WHAT ARE THE OPTIONS FOR MANAGING ASBESTOS?

If asbestos or asbestos – containing material (ACM) is present or believed to be present, the options for managing the asbestos are outlined on the table over the page.

## WHAT IS AN ASBESTOS REMOVAL PLAN?

An asbestos removal plan should clearly describe the process that will be followed when removing asbestos or ACM. It must ensure that there is no possibility of the process being misunderstood and result in the unsafe removal of the asbestos which could endanger the health of removal workers and other people in the vicinity of the removal work.

The asbestos removal plan must allow for complete asbestos containment. All practicable steps must be taken to ensure that no-one involved in the removal work or in the vicinity of the removal work will be exposed to asbestos fibres.

Asbestos management option	Option involves	Appropriate when	Not appropriate when
<b>Removal<sup>1</sup></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; complete removal of asbestos or ACM from building</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; surface is friable or asbestos poorly bonded</li> <li>&gt; asbestos is severely water-damaged or liable to damage or deterioration</li> <li>&gt; there is lichen growth or damage due to lichen</li> <li>&gt; asbestos is located in air conditioning ducts</li> <li>&gt; airborne asbestos levels exceed exposure standard</li> <li>&gt; other control techniques are inappropriate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; asbestos is located in inaccessible or hard-to-reach areas</li> <li>&gt; removal would be difficult and other measures would provide satisfactory control</li> </ul>
<b>Encapsulation<sup>1,2</sup></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; coating ACM with a product that penetrates into and hardens the material</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; removal of asbestos is difficult or not feasible</li> <li>&gt; the likelihood of the asbestos being damaged is minimal</li> <li>&gt; the building has a short life expectancy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; asbestos is deteriorating</li> <li>&gt; has been water-damaged</li> <li>&gt; sealant application is difficult</li> <li>&gt; the area of damaged material is large</li> </ul>
<b>Sealing<sup>1,2</sup></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; applying a protective coating to the ACM that creates an impermeable seal for the asbestos eg paint</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; the asbestos is readily visible for regular assessment</li> </ul>	
<b>Enclosure<sup>2,3</sup></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; placing a barrier between ACM and the surrounding environment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; removal of asbestos is extremely difficult</li> <li>&gt; fibres are able to be fully contained within enclosure</li> <li>&gt; most of the surface already is inaccessible (ie enclosed)</li> <li>&gt; disturbance to, or entry into the enclosure is unlikely</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; enclosure is liable to be damaged or water may occur</li> <li>&gt; asbestos cannot be fully enclosed</li> </ul>
<b>Deferral</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; no action is taken at present time</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; risk of asbestos exposure is negligible, and</li> <li>&gt; asbestos is inaccessible and fully contained, or</li> <li>&gt; asbestos is stable and unlikely to be damaged</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; there is a possibility of deterioration or</li> <li>&gt; airborne asbestos levels may exceed recommended standards</li> </ul>

Appropriate when	Advantages	Disadvantages
Used on complex surfaces can be extremely effective uses fewer techniques safer alternative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; hazard is removed</li> <li>&gt; no further action is required</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; increase in immediate risk of exposure, particularly to removal workers</li> <li>&gt; creates significant disruption to building occupants</li> <li>&gt; may be the most costly, complex and time-consuming option</li> <li>&gt; removal may increase fire risk in building so a substitute material would be required</li> <li>&gt; potential for contamination of whole building if removal is not carried out correctly</li> </ul>
Prioritising or containing damaged areas can avoid damage to other asbestos	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; quick and cost-effective</li> <li>&gt; asbestos dust is contained</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; hazard has not been removed</li> <li>&gt; if the area of asbestos is large, cost may be similar to cost of removal</li> <li>&gt; eventual removal may be made more difficult and costly</li> <li>&gt; enclosure and clearance procedures for encapsulation are still required</li> </ul>
Useful to be used where damage is extensive can be fully effective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; minimal disruption to occupants</li> <li>&gt; provides an adequate method of asbestos control for some situations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; hazard remains</li> <li>&gt; ongoing maintenance of enclosure is required</li> <li>&gt; asbestos management programme is required</li> <li>&gt; if the asbestos is removed in the future, the enclosure will need to be removed first</li> <li>&gt; precautions required to prohibit entry of enclosure</li> </ul>
Minimises possibility of damage to asbestos keeps dust levels low prevents extended exposure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; no initial cost</li> <li>&gt; cost of removal is deferred</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; the asbestos hazard remains</li> <li>&gt; ongoing assessment and monitoring is required</li> <li>&gt; asbestos management programme required</li> </ul>

1 Work may only be carried out by a person holding a certificate of competence.

2 If the enclosure, encapsulation or sealing options are used in commercial buildings, the location of the asbestos must be clearly labelled and recorded on the building plans.

3 This option is only acceptable where AC is in good condition and the barrier is designed to protect against mechanical damage.

## **WHEN IS AN ASBESTOS REMOVAL PLAN REQUIRED?**

An asbestos removal plan should be prepared and implemented by the asbestos remover whenever asbestos or ACM is to be removed. The removal plan should be specific to the site for which it is written.

The asbestos removal plan should describe:

- > the location, type and condition of the asbestos to be removed
- > who will be removing the asbestos or ACM
- > what equipment will be used to remove the asbestos or ACM
- > how the asbestos or ACM will be removed safely
- > how the enclosure will be constructed
- > what decontamination procedures will be used for personnel and equipment
- > what the clearance procedures will be once the asbestos has been removed
- > how the enclosure and decontamination facilities will be dismantled.

## **WHO MAY CARRY OUT ASBESTOS WORK?**

### **Friable asbestos**

All work involving **friable** asbestos including encapsulation and sealing, is restricted work under the Asbestos Regulations and can only be carried out by a person holding a certificate of competence or by someone under the direct supervision of a person holding a certificate of competence.

### **Non-friable asbestos**

The removal of non-friable asbestos does not require a certificate of competence holder to undertake the work. However, it is specialist work requiring a high degree of competence and knowledge.

### **Undamaged asbestos**

Where ACM is present and undamaged, it may be left in place and no further action may be required.