

Managing asbestos in NSW Public Schools

Factsheet

This factsheet provides Principals and their school community with information about asbestos and how it is managed on NSW school sites. The Department of Education has a rigorous system of maintenance and monitoring at all schools across NSW.

The health, safety and well-being of the community is the Department's highest priority.

How is asbestos managed on school sites?

Hazardous material on public school sites is managed in strict accordance with Safe Work NSW and all applicable legislation, regulations, policies and guidelines including the Department's *Asbestos Management Plan for NSW Government Schools*.

The plan covers how asbestos is managed on school sites, organisational responsibilities, removal and remediation procedures and ongoing asbestos management.

Any asbestos concerns are reported to the local Asset Management Unit. The Department takes immediate action where necessary, consistent with relevant statutory guidelines. When removing asbestos, work is scheduled to ensure no risk to students, staff or the community.

Where can asbestos be found?

The Department of Education manages a large and diverse portfolio of school infrastructure. Asbestos was commonly used between the 1940's and late 1980's and is present today in materials of the era such as cement sheeting, some old heaters, vinyl floor tiles, insulation and wall lining.

What are the different types of asbestos?

Non-bonded asbestos (friable)

Any material that contains asbestos and is in a powder form or can be crumbled, pulverised or reduced to powder by hand pressure when dry. If disturbed, fibres can become airborne.

Bonded asbestos (non-friable)

Bonded asbestos is attached to other materials such as cement or vinyl and cannot be crumbled or powdered by light pressure.

Vermiculite

Vermiculite is a product that can be combined with asbestos. Test data shows less than 2% of vermiculite in NSW schools contains asbestos. The Department has an ongoing remediation program for vermiculite containing asbestos.

School asbestos registers

Each school has an asbestos register which records all identified and suspected asbestos on the site. The register is publicly available and is consulted before any maintenance or capital works are undertaken at a school.

Does all asbestos need to be removed?

No. There are several ways to control asbestos, depending on the type of asbestos and its location. Removing the material may not always be the most appropriate way of managing it.

Informing the Asset Management Unit

All schools are required to notify their local Asset Management Unit (AMU) of any works to be carried out on their site. This includes work that may disturb asbestos containing material (ACM).

Where do I get more information?

If you would like to know more, contact your Principal who is supported by their local Asset Management Unit (AMU).