

Labelling asbestos in workplaces

Guidance on labelling asbestos in workplaces for persons with management or control of workplaces and employers.

September 2015

Background

The Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2007 (OHS Regulations) include specific duties in relation to identifying the presence of asbestos in workplaces and indicating its location.

A person with management or control of a workplace or an employer in a workplace where there is fixed or installed asbestos containing material (ACM) must, so far as is reasonably practicable, identify all asbestos that is under their management or control.

This includes identifying ACM that is fixed or installed in buildings, structures (such as tunnels and access pits), ships, or plant (such as boilers with asbestos containing insulation and pipelines with asbestos containing gaskets). Material assumed to contain asbestos and inaccessible areas likely to contain asbestos must also be identified.

Once identified, the presence and location of asbestos must be recorded in the **asbestos register** and clearly indicated. If reasonably practicable, **labelling** must be used to indicate the presence of ACM.

Labelling asbestos identified in the workplace

Labels should be durable. A process should also be established to check labels are maintained in good condition. The location of the labels should be consistent with the location of any asbestos recorded in the asbestos register.

Labelling methods may vary depending on the type of ACM present in the workplace.

- 1) Direct labelling, if safe to do so, that includes the word 'asbestos' is the most effective way to identify the presence and location of asbestos (refer to Figures 1 and 2).



Figure 1 - Label directly on ACM



Figure 2 - Another type of asbestos label

This method increases awareness of the presence of asbestos and where it is located. For example, if maintenance work is required on or near the asbestos, it is immediately clear that the item contains asbestos and appropriate precautions must be taken to avoid exposure. Where direct labelling is not possible, labels should be situated as close as possible to the asbestos containing item or area, for example:

- a room with asbestos containing vinyl floor tiles may have labels with an arrow pointing down placed on the skirting boards on all four walls
- a ceiling space that has low level asbestos contaminated dust may have a label placed at the access door/hatch (refer to Figure 3)
- an asbestos cement roof may have labels placed at access points to the roof (refer to Figure 4).

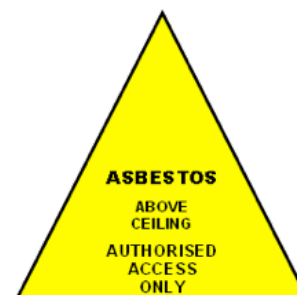


Figure 3 - Label advising the ceiling space contains asbestos



Figure 4 - Label at roof access point advising the roofing material contains asbestos

- 2) Colour coded labelling may also be used to identify the presence and location of asbestos. This method is less effective than direct labelling as it requires clear communication with employees and contractors as to the presence and meaning of the coloured labels and what action is required if labels are encountered in areas to be worked on or surrounding areas.

A label directly on or adjacent to identified asbestos is preferred and most effective. In situations where a label cannot be placed directly on or adjacent to identified asbestos, a label (or sign) nearby or at entrance points to rooms or buildings should be considered. The 'sign' in this context would be used to label the area.

- 3) Placing signs at the entrances of buildings and rooms to identify the presence of asbestos is less effective than direct labelling. If this method is used, signs should be placed at every entrance and indicate that prior to any work being undertaken the asbestos register should be referred to for the specific location and condition of asbestos (refer to Figure 5). In relation to any work to be undertaken in these areas, once the register has been reviewed appropriate controls should be implemented.



Figure 5 - Label placed at every entrance to a building that contains asbestos

Providing information

Employers must provide employees and contractors with information and instruction necessary to do their job in a way that is safe and without risk to their health. A person with management or control of a workplace must ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that the workplace is safe and without risks to health. As such, employers and persons with management or control should ensure that employers, employees and contractors are made aware of the methods used to indicate the presence and location of asbestos in the workplace. Induction for employees and contractors should include the **asbestos management plan** (refer to *A step by step guide to managing asbestos in workplaces*) which should outline the labelling system (including the type of labels and their locations) and its maintenance. Refresher training on the labelling system and asbestos management plan should occur at a frequency appropriate to the workplace and activities being undertaken.

Further information

Contact the WorkSafe Victoria Advisory Service on **1800 136 089** or go to **worksafe.vic.gov.au**

Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004

Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2007

legislation.vic.gov.au

WorkSafe Victoria publications

Managing asbestos in workplaces Compliance Code

A step by step guide to managing asbestos in workplaces

Note: This guidance material has been prepared using the best information available to WorkSafe, and should be used for general use only. Any information about legislative obligations or responsibilities included in this material is only applicable to the circumstances described in the material. You should always check the legislation referred to in this material and make your own judgement about what action you may need to take to ensure you have complied with the law. Accordingly, WorkSafe cannot be held responsible and extends no warranties as to the suitability of the information for your specific circumstances; or actions taken by third parties as a result of information contained in the guidance material.