



Unit 6 Emergency Procedures Asbestos

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit the learner will be able to:

- ✓ Determine the appropriate response in the event of an asbestos emergency
- ✓ Take decisive action to safeguard others in the area from the dangers of exposure
- ✓ Evaluate whether or not it is necessary to hire a licensed contractor

Unit 6

Emergency Procedures Asbestos

When asbestos materials are damaged they release tiny fibres which, if breathed in can cause serious and often fatal diseases. But what should you do if accidental asbestos exposure occurs on site? These simple steps can help protect your health if you think you have disturbed asbestos materials.

Asbestos is a dangerous material if disturbed. When asbestos materials are damaged they release tiny fibres which, if breathed in can cause serious and often fatal asbestos diseases. Without the proper controls in place, removing or disturbing asbestos materials is very high risk.

You should always work with the correct type of asbestos survey in place to prevent accidental disturbance of asbestos-containing materials. A good procedure to follow is before disturbing any building materials as part of your work or other activity, is to ask yourself, could the material I am about to disturb contain asbestos?

If the answer is yes, or I don't know - you need a survey.

Once you know what you are dealing with you can put the appropriate control measures to prevent exposure - or get in a specialist where required.

Unfortunately, accidental asbestos disturbance does still happen. Either because the person isn't aware of the presence of asbestos, or doesn't realise the danger. Acting fast is crucial to prevent the spread of deadly asbestos fibres, and make the area safe.

Unexpected Discovery of Asbestos

If during your work you discover materials which you believe to be asbestos stop work immediately. Put up a warning sign and ensure nobody enters the area. Report the problem to whoever is in charge and arrange to have a sample of the material analysed. If it does not contain asbestos then work can continue. If the material does contain asbestos then follow the flow chart to decide if the work needs a licensed contractor.

Alternatively, you could presume that the material contains the worst type of asbestos and apply the appropriate controls, using a licensed contractor if required.

If you are employed in-house, remember to tell your manager to update the asbestos management plan; otherwise report it to the customer.

Accidental Release of Asbestos

If you accidentally disturb and release asbestos during your work, it must be dealt with quickly and appropriately.

The clean-up of lower risk asbestos materials where the fibres are firmly bound in a matrix but are essentially in good condition (ie mostly intact), such as asbestos cement (AC), bitumen products, papers, textiles, small-scale release of asbestos insulating board (AIB) etc will generally not require a licensed contractor.

Emergency Procedures

Your emergency procedures should include managing an uncontrolled release of asbestos materials into the workplace.

Steps should be taken to:

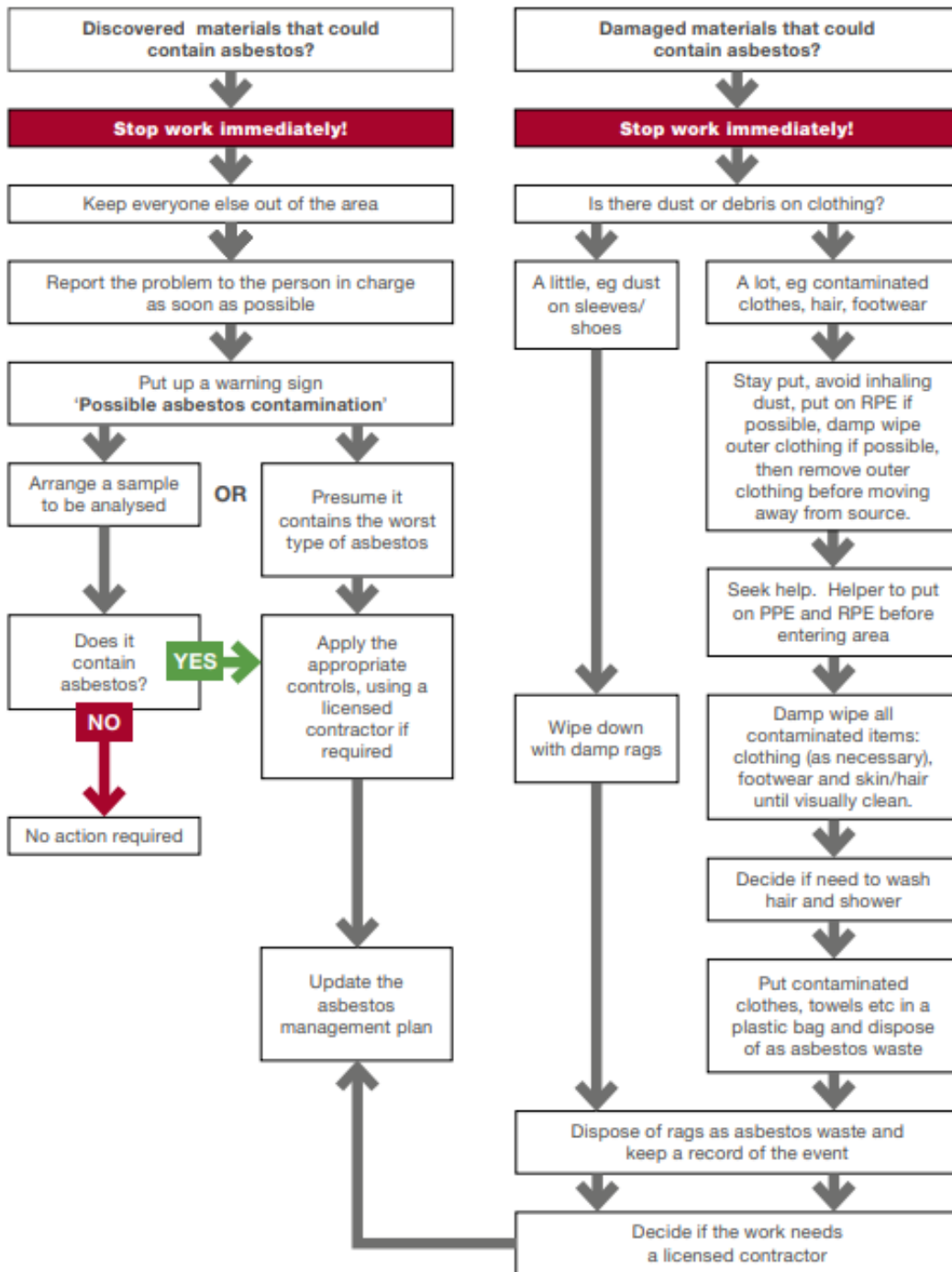
- Warn anybody who may be affected;
- Exclude from the area anyone not needed to deal with the release;
- Identify the cause of the uncontrolled release;
- Regain adequate control as soon as possible;
- Make sure anyone in the work area affected who is not wearing personal protective equipment (PPE), including respiratory protective equipment (RPE), leaves the affected area immediately. Minimise the spread of asbestos by ensuring they are suitably decontaminated;
- Clean up dust and debris
- Decontaminate anyone who is contaminated with dust and debris;
- Ensure rags, clothing or PPE is decontaminated or disposed of as Contaminated waste;
- Consider lone and/or remote workers to ensure they can alert someone if necessary.



Top row: An asbestos gasket, asbestos cement pipes and an asbestos- containing fuse board

Bottom row: The asbestos cement pipes are labelled, so are the tiles, but you might not know until you start to lift them. There could be sprayed limpet under the AC sheeting

Flow chart





ALB fire surround



Don't assume there will always be warning signs. There could be undiscovered asbestos in buildings you work on

Further Reading:

- ✓ Construction Hazardous Materials Compliance Guide: Asbestos Detection, Abatement and Inspection Procedures 1st Edition, Kindle Edition by R. Dodge Woodson ,2012
- ✓ Safety First: A Workplace Case Study: OSHA/HSE/NEBOSH-D by J.R. Wesley,2018