

SAFETY BULLETIN

83– Change to Asbestos Regulations QLD

What is the Change?

Asbestos can be classified as 'friable' or 'non-friable.' As of the 1st of May 2021, Queensland have amended regulations to reclassify low density asbestos fibre board as friable asbestos containing material (ACM).

'Friable' means when dry, or as a result of work process, the material may be crumbled, pulverised or reduced to a powder by hand pressure. When asbestos becomes friable and breaks down, it releases tiny fibres into the air which become a health risk. Unless adequate precautions are taken, these fibres can be breathed in causing long term damage to the lungs which can lead to conditions such as asbestosis, mesothelioma and lung cancer. Non-friable (or "bonded") is the other type of asbestos material and in its original condition, is quite safe to be around. Over years however, weather impacts and general wear and tear can damage the material to the point where it too becomes friable.

Before undertaking any works it is essential that site registers are checked for the presence of asbestos and the condition of asbestos is determined. In order to effectively manage risks, all ACM and potential situations that may result in exposure to asbestos fibres/dust must be identified. If there is any doubt as to whether a material is asbestos containing, it must be presumed to contain asbestos unless it is tested and confirmed otherwise.

If you expect you have encountered ACM, follow the below steps;

1. Stop work and inform your Supervisor.
2. Barricade, sign and where possible seal the area where suspected ACM has been identified. Notify other workers and clear the area.
3. Liaise with the site contact regarding arrangements for the testing of the suspected ACM product.
4. If the lab result indicates the sample is not an ACM product, then the work process may resume.
5. If the lab result indicates the material does contain asbestos, then arrangements shall be made with relevant stakeholders for a suitably qualified person to remediate the material (depending on the ACM type and condition). Asbestos removal must be carried out in accordance with an Asbestos Removal Control Plan.
6. Once the remediation has occurred, formal notification is required advising the site is fit for reoccupation. A clearance certificate is required which may include clearance air monitoring.

Report all incidents and near misses