Work Safely and in Compliance

Asbestos Abatement

This Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission (WSCC) asbestos information sheet helps ensure employers and workers comply with the Northwest Territories and Nunavut *Safety Acts, Asbestos Safety Regulations* and other applicable regulations.

WHAT IS ASBESTOS?

Asbestos is a hazardous material. Asbestos fibres are extremely fine and can remain suspended in the air for hours; exposure to asbestos occurs when workers inhale air containing asbestos fibres.

Possible health effects resulting from asbestos exposure include, but are not limited to:

- asbestosis (inflammation and fibrous tissue build up—sometimes called scarring),
- lung cancer, and
- mesothelioma (cancer of the lungs' protective outer lining).

LEGISLATION, STANDARDS, GUIDELINES, AND BEST PRACTICES

All projects must comply with the *Safety Acts, the Asbestos Safety Regulations* and the *Mine Health and Safety Regulations*, as well as other relevant legislation and regulations. The *Asbestos Safety Regulations* set the requirements for any work with materials containing asbestos. The WSCC *Asbestos Abatement Code of Practice* provides current standards for work involving asbestos materials in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut. Complying with the *Asbestos Abatement Code of Practice* is proof of compliance with regulatory requirements.

Only workers with asbestos removal training and qualifications can participate in asbestos abatement (the demolition, renovation or salvage at worksites where asbestos is present).

Asbestos Abatement Steps

1. Conduct a risk assessment and asbestos survey where asbestos may be present or if the building was built prior to 1990.
2. The Prevention Services division of the WSCC must receive an Asbestos Project Notification (APN) and written work procedures at least five (5) days before work is to begin. You can obtain the Asbestos Project Notification Form on the WSCC website under Employer Forms: http://www.wscc.nt.ca/Employers/Forms/Documents/Asbestos%20Project%20Notification%20Form%20ENGLISH.pdf Send the completed form and work procedures to asbestos@wscc.nt.ca.
3. A Safety Officer reviews the APN and work procedures. They may request clarification of work procedures or additional documentation.
4. When work procedures and documentation support the safe removal of asbestos, the WSCC sends a commencement letter permitting the asbestos abatement work to begin.
5. A WSCC Safety Officer may visit the workplace during the asbestos abatement.
6. You must inform the WSCC when the asbestos abatement work is completed and provide:
   - a list of workers involved in the work; and
   - a complete summary of air sample results.

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Procedures: Write Them Down

Written work procedures must include the following information:

- the type of material containing asbestos;
- the category of asbestos abatement activities: low, moderate or high risk;
- a list of equipment;
- personal protective equipment requirements;
- the respiratory protection program — type of respirator, fit test records;
- the site decontamination procedures;
- the worker decontamination procedures;
- air sampling procedures and schedule;
- applicable hazardous material testing results – asbestos, lead, etc.; and
- an emergency response plan.

Proper Training

While written work procedures are a WSCC requirement, workers must have proper training to safely implement the work procedures.

In addition to asbestos abatement procedures, employers should also have written procedures addressing all other applicable aspects of occupational health and safety in the workplace. Examples include, but are not limited to, fall protection, first aid and Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS).

While conducting site inspections a Safety Officer may ask employers to provide worker fit test records, worker education or training certificates and any other applicable documentation.

Air monitoring

All projects require air samples. A baseline sample prior to work, samples during abatment activities and a sample upon completion.

RESOURCES

Employers should use the Asbestos Abatement Code of Practice planning asbestos abatement projects. Following this Code of Practice ensures employer compliance with applicable legislation and regulations. Employers may also find it necessary to consult with qualified occupational health and safety specialists to help interpret these and other available guidelines. Examples of air quality specialists include industrial or occupational hygienists or building engineering specialists.

For more information about safe asbestos removal:

Workers' Safety & Compensation Commission, *Asbestos Abatement Code of Practice*

http://www.wscc.nt.ca/Workers/Documents/Asbestos%20Abatement%20Code%20of%20Practice.pdf