
ASBESTOS
AWARENESS
DANGER
ASBESTOS
WARNING
WARNING

Program

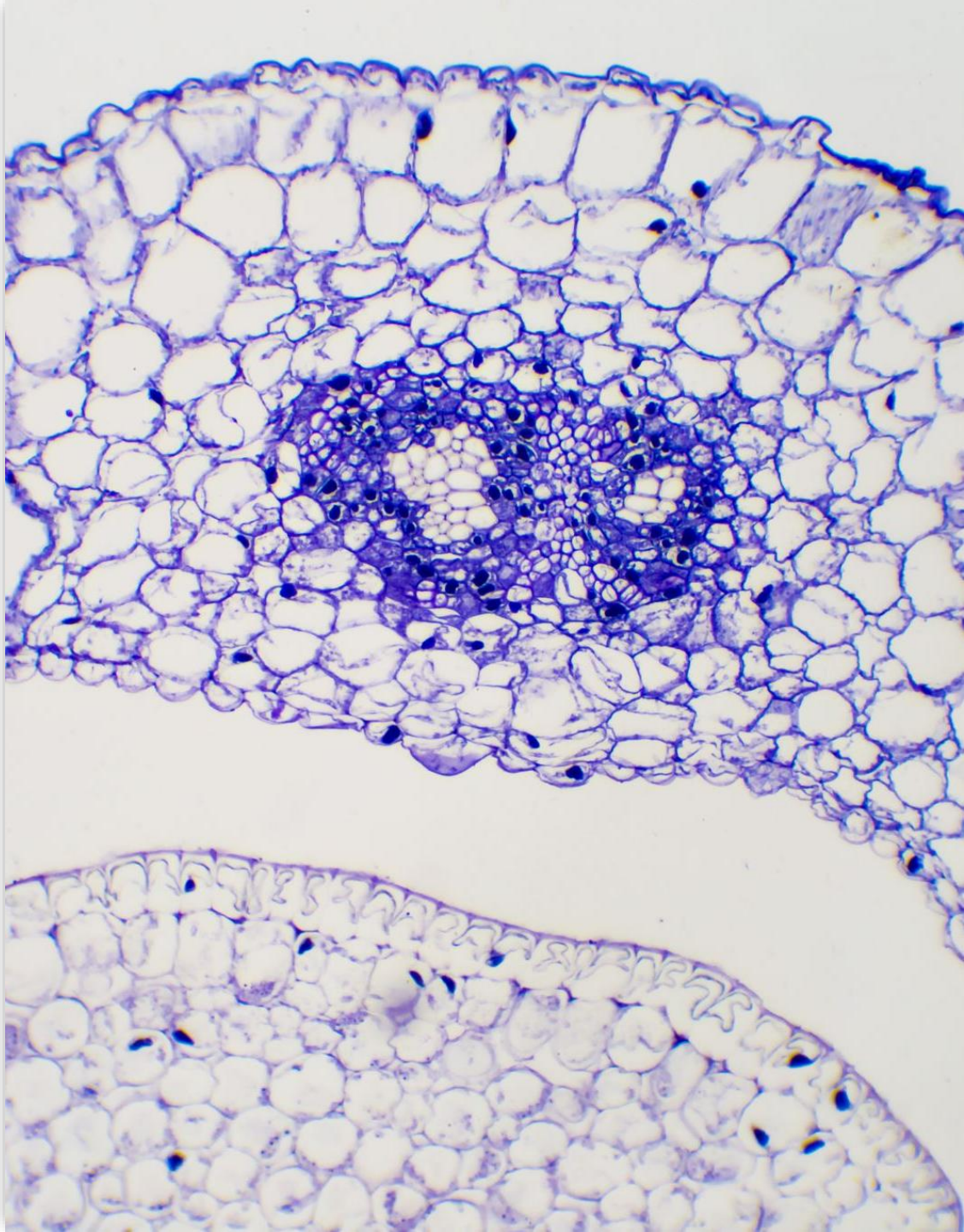
- Health Effects
- Legislative Requirements (NSW)
- Identification of Asbestos
- Risk Management
- Safe Work Practices
- Emergency Procedures
- Waste Management

Health Effects of Asbestos

Overview of major health impacts from asbestos exposure

Asbestosis

Asbestosis: Chronic lung disease caused by inhalation of asbestos fibres resulting in lung scarring (fibrosis), reduced lung function, shortness of breath, and increased risk of respiratory failure.



Mesothelioma

Mesothelioma: Aggressive and fatal cancer of the mesothelium (lining of lungs, abdomen, or heart), strongly associated with asbestos exposure; long latency period (20–50 years).

Lung Cancer

- Lung Cancer: Increased risk of bronchogenic carcinoma; risk significantly elevated in combination with smoking.

Pleural Conditions

Pleural Plaques: Localised thickened areas on the pleura; generally asymptomatic but indicative of asbestos exposure. Pleural Thickening: Diffuse thickening of pleural lining leading to reduced lung expansion and impaired respiratory function.

Other Cancers

Other Cancers: Increased risk of cancers of the larynx and ovary associated with asbestos exposure.

Latency Period

Latency Period: Diseases typically develop decades after exposure (10–50 years).

Exposure Risk

No Safe Exposure Level: Any exposure to airborne asbestos fibres carries risk of disease.

LEGISLATIVE REFERENCES (NSW)

- Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (NSW) – Sections 19, 27
- Work Health and Safety Regulation 2017 (NSW) – Chapter 8 (Clauses 419–489)
- Code of Practice – How to Manage and Control Asbestos in the Workplace
- Code of Practice – How to Safely Remove Asbestos
- SafeWork NSW Guidance – Asbestos and Your Health
- Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997 (NSW) – Waste Transport and Disposal

TYPES OF ASBESTOS

FRIABLE ASBESTOS

- EASILY CRUMBLES AND RELEASES FIBERS
- HIGHER HEALTH RISK

INSULATION · TEXTILES · SPRAYED COATINGS

NON-FRIABLE ASBESTOS

- HARD AND COMPACT MATERIALS
- LOWER HEALTH RISK

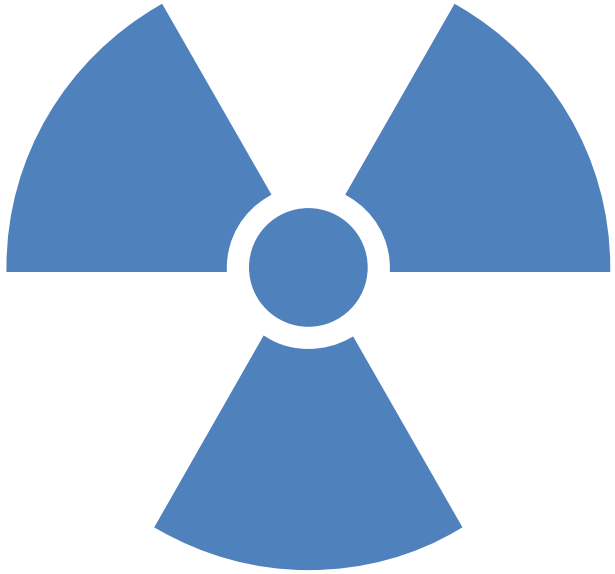
CEMENTING PRODUCTS · FLOOR TILES · ROOF SHEETING

Friable Asbestos

Friable asbestos is asbestos in a powder form or that can be crumbled, pulverised or reduced to a powder by hand pressure when dry.

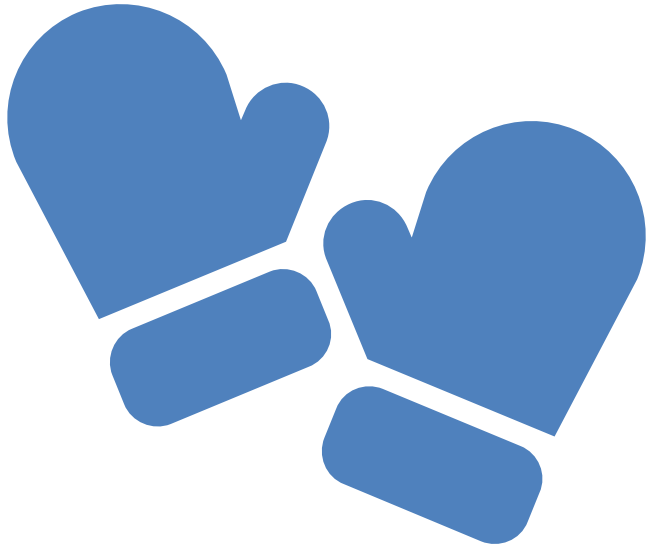
Non-Friable Asbestos

Non-friable asbestos is material containing asbestos fibres reinforced with a bonding compound. It is also known as bonded asbestos and can be found in products such as asbestos cement sheeting commonly used in building materials between 1940’s to the late 1980’s.



Risk Management

- Identify asbestos-containing materials (ACMs) through registers, surveys, and testing
- Assess risk based on condition, friability, location, and potential disturbance
- Eliminate or minimise exposure using the hierarchy of controls
- Develop asbestos management plans and safe work method statements (SWMS)
- Engage licensed asbestos removalists where required
- Implement air monitoring and health surveillance where exposure risk exists
- Maintain records including asbestos register, risk assessments, and removal documentation



Safe Work Practices

- Do not disturb ACMs unless necessary and authorised
- Use appropriate controls: isolation, enclosures, wet methods, and local exhaust ventilation
- Prohibit dry cutting, sanding, drilling, or high-pressure cleaning of ACMs
- Use suitable personal protective equipment (PPE): respirators (P2/P3), disposable coveralls, gloves
- Establish exclusion zones with signage and barriers
- Decontaminate personnel and equipment after work
- Use approved asbestos handling and removal procedures

Emergency Procedures

- Stop work immediately if asbestos is disturbed unexpectedly
- Isolate the area and prevent access
- Notify supervisor and relevant personnel
- Assess contamination and initiate incident response
- Engage licensed asbestos professionals for clean-up
- Conduct air monitoring if required
- Record and report incident in accordance with regulatory requirements

Waste Management

- Segregate asbestos waste from other waste streams
- Double-wrap or bag in 200-micron plastic and seal securely
- Label clearly as asbestos waste
- Transport by licensed carriers in accordance with regulations
- Dispose at approved asbestos waste facilities
- Maintain waste tracking documentation
- Clean tools and equipment or dispose of as contaminated waste