

# SAFETY ALERT

## Asbestos



Asbestos could be in the house or building you are working on right now. As a general rule if your house was built or renovated:

- before the mid-1980s - it is **highly likely** that it has asbestos-containing products
- between the mid-1980s and 1990 - it is **likely** that it has asbestos-containing products
- after 1990 - it is **unlikely** that it has asbestos-containing products.

When you come across Asbestos if left alone it isn't a danger but once disturbed, tiny asbestos fibres are released into the atmosphere. This can be lethal if breathed in, causing lung disease and cancer.

If you are carrying out maintenance such as painting or sealing on asbestos cement surfaces without sanding, cutting or drilling (i.e. you are not releasing any asbestos fibres into the air), you only need to take the usual precautions for these activities (such as working in a ventilated area). However, if you plan to disturb materials that might contain asbestos (such as by sanding, cutting or drilling), it is important to take the proper precautions for handling asbestos to avoid risking your health or the health of your family and neighbours.

### Clean up properly so that you safely remove and dispose of asbestos waste:

- Before starting job, cover your work with plastic sheets to make cleaning up easier
- Clean as you go to stop waste building up
- Use damp cloth to wipe down tools and surface to remove asbestos fibres
- Don't sweep or use a domestic vacuum cleaner because it will spread the asbestos fibres in the air
- Ensure all waste including masks, coveralls, clothes, plastic sheets are double bagged in plastic sacks, sealed with tape and labelled as asbestos waste. Dispose at licensed disposal site

### Wear the right PPE because the wrong ones will not protect you:

- Wear a disposable, correctly fitted P2 face mask (minimum)
- Where suitable coveralls; wear one size too big to prevent ripping
- Make sure you put the legs of the coveralls over the top of your foot wear- don't tuck them in as it lets in dust
- Do not re-use disposable masks and coveralls – dispose of them safely as hazardous waste after you have finished the job. Don't take them home.

### Legislation

The Host Employer must ensure that — (a) exposure of a person at the workplace to airborne asbestos is eliminated so far as is reasonably practicable; and (b) if it is not reasonably practicable to eliminate exposure to airborne asbestos — exposure is then minimised so far as is reasonably practicable.

### Further information

Go to: [asbestos.sa.gov.au](http://asbestos.sa.gov.au) website. It is the outcome of collaboration between SafeWork SA, SA Health, the Environment Protection Authority (EPA), the Local Government Association of South Australia, Housing SA and the Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure (DPTI).

**STOP-THINK-DO**

### Need More Information

Contact: Graeme Webster – WHS Manager Mobile: 0450 291 702 E-mail: [graemew@tapssa.com.au](mailto:graemew@tapssa.com.au)