

Asbestos

Exposure to asbestos is hazardous to health. As a general rule, all persons involved in the design, construction, and maintenance of buildings must avoid the use of asbestos containing material (ACM) and ensure that the removal of ACM from **existing buildings** will be carried out only by registered asbestos personnel.

Prohibition

2. The use of asbestos and ACM in any industrial or manufacturing process including any building operation are prohibited under the Factories and Industrial Undertakings (Asbestos) Regulation (Cap 59AD). Effective from 4 April 2014, the import, transshipment, use and supply of asbestos and ACM are banned under the Air Pollution Control Ordinance (APCO) (Cap 311), whilst ACM present in existing buildings will not be affected.

Control and Abatement Works

3. Certain building activities, such as the clearance of unauthorised building works, and repair or demolition of existing buildings, may involve the handling of in-situ ACM. Such activities should be controlled and where necessary, abatement works should be carried out. Generally speaking, for all building works where ACM is present or suspected to be present, the control and abatement measures required include the following :

- (a) appointment of a registered asbestos consultant as early as possible to carry out an asbestos investigation;
- (b) as part of the investigation of suspected ACM, possibly the taking of samples for testing by a registered asbestos laboratory;
- (c) for cases where the presence of ACM is confirmed, preparation and submission of the following to the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) :
 - an Asbestos Abatement Plan for the planned removal of ACM; and/or
 - an Operation and Maintenance Plan for deferred treatment, e.g. encapsulation, enclosure, of the same;
- (d) appointment of a registered asbestos contractor to carry out the removal works under the supervision of an asbestos consultant;

- (e) 28-day advance notice to EPD before commencement of works;
- (f) protection of the workers in accordance with the requirements of the Labour Department (LD) ; and
- (g) proper disposal of asbestos contaminated waste in accordance with the requirements of EPD.

4. For more effective control of the in-situ ACM and to ensure better protection for personnel working in the related building sites, all authorized persons and registered structural engineers are advised to take the following steps:

- (a) complete asbestos investigation and abatement of the ACM before commencement of other building activities;
- (b) refrain unauthorised personnel, the scavengers in particular, from entering the works site, before completion of the asbestos investigation with all the in-situ ACM inventoried, photographed, conspicuously labelled and segregated; and
- (c) ask the registered asbestos consultant supervising the abatement works to certify successful completion of the abatement works in accordance with the asbestos investigation report and the abatement plan, and immediately notify EPD of the same.

General Information

5. LD, through its Occupational Safety and Health Branch, gives advice on the health and safety of workers engaged in any work involving ACM.

6. The Asbestos Management and Control Section of EPD gives general advice on asbestos management and abatement techniques and keeps registers of asbestos consultants, asbestos contractors, asbestos supervisors and asbestos laboratories.

7. For certain asbestos abatement works involving only low risk and readily identifiable non-friable ACM, the requirement of the services of an asbestos consultant and/or an asbestos contractor may be exempted. The exemption list was published in the Gazette Notice 25/1997 - GN 3021 and GN 3022 on 6 June 1997, and a copy of which is available at EPD's website: <http://www.epd.gov.hk>.

8. Relevant information on the subject can also be found in the following publications :

- (a) Code of Practice: Safety and Health at Work with Asbestos published by LD.
- (b) Health Hazards of Asbestos published by LD.

- (c) 5 sets of Code of Practice on Asbestos Control published by EPD :-
- Handling, Transportation and Disposal of Asbestos Waste;
 - Preparation of Asbestos Investigation Report, Asbestos Management Plan and Asbestos Abatement Plan;
 - Asbestos Work Using Full Containment or Mini Containment Method;
 - Safe Handling of Low Risk Asbestos Containing Material; and
 - Asbestos Work Using Glove Bag Method.
- (d) 3 leaflets published by EPD :-
- Environmental Asbestos Control;
 - Asbestos Removal of Unauthorised Building Works; and
 - Banning Asbestos.
- (e) Practice Note 2/97 Handling of Asbestos Containing Materials in Buildings issued by the Professional Persons Environmental Consultative Committee.
- (f) Code of Practice for Demolition of Buildings published by the Buildings Department.
9. A similar practice note has been issued to authorized persons, registered structural engineers and registered geotechnical engineers.

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