

Asbestos Management Guide

for Principals in Schools



As the school principal, you are responsible for the day-to-day operations within the school property (grounds and buildings), plus the ongoing maintenance of school buildings. The purpose of this checklist is to ensure you are meeting your duties and obligations under the Health and Safety at Work (Asbestos) Regulations 2016. Use it to ensure you are following the correct steps at each point of the process.

Day-to-day management requirements

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Identify whether asbestos is present in your school

Ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that all asbestos or asbestos containing material (ACM), is identified by either an experienced or competent person who has undergone appropriate training, or a qualified asbestos surveyor.

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If asbestos has been identified or is assumed to exist:

1 Produce an Asbestos Management Plan

Follow the Worksafe NZ guidance to produce an Asbestos Management Plan which sets out how asbestos or ACM will be managed and ensure the plan is always kept up to date.

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2 Update your Hazard and Risk Register

Include the presence or assumed presence of both friable and non-friable asbestos in your school register and ensure the stated controls are implemented and reviewed regularly.

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3 Communicate asbestos information

Ensure asbestos information (i.e. Asbestos Management Plan and Hazard and Risk Register) is provided to anyone who undertakes work at the school.

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4 Monitor asbestos condition

Schedule regular inspections of asbestos or ACM and record any changes to the condition in your Asbestos Management Plan. Action any deterioration or damage to material condition.

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Project works requirements

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When commissioning construction, refurbishment or demolition works, or when removing asbestos:

Ensure an Asbestos Refurbishment or Demolition Survey is conducted by a Licensed Asbestos Surveyor

The survey will detail the presence of any asbestos or ACM and outline recommendations for managing it.

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If asbestos or ACM is assumed, or identified by the survey:

1 Engage a licensed Asbestos Removalist from the WorkSafe licence holder register to complete the removal works

Ensure they also prepare an asbestos removal control plan.

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2 Communicate intended removal works

Inform everyone who may be affected by the works, as well as WorkSafe.

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3 Engage a licensed assessor to undertake air monitoring during the removal works

This will provide assurance that no person has been exposed to unsafe levels of airborne asbestos.
NB: The licensed asbestos assessor must be financially independent from the engaged asbestos removal company.

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4 Ensure you are provided with a Clearance Certificate following removal

The independent Asbestos Assessor will provide this, confirming the area is safe for reoccupation.

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5 Update information and registers

Update the school's asbestos information, including Asbestos Management Plan and the school Hazard and Risk Register.

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Frequently Asked Questions

How do I know if there is asbestos in my school?

There are a number of ways you can identify asbestos, including:

1. If the building was built prior to 1 January 2000 it is likely to contain asbestos containing material and you could assume that your school building contains asbestos.
2. Follow the WorkSafe Approved Code of Practice Guidance to identify what is likely to contain asbestos by conducting a visual inspection. This needs to be carried out by an experienced or competent person which could include your own staff who have undergone appropriate training. Staff should not damage the suspected asbestos in any way when making this determination and correct personal protective equipment (PPE) should be worn.
3. Employ a qualified asbestos surveyor to assess your building.

Where can asbestos be found?

See the WorkSafe website for information and posters on where asbestos can be found:

www.worksafe.govt.nz/topic-and-industry/asbestos/working-with-asbestos/where-asbestos-can-be-found/

What is the difference between friable and non-friable asbestos?

Friable asbestos is in a powder form or is able to be crumbled, pulverised, or reduced to a powder by hand pressure when dry. While all asbestos has the potential to become airborne, friable is more likely to become airborne and is far more of a health hazard and therefore requires more stringent and costly removal practices.

Non-friable asbestos is not in a powder or cannot be crumbled, pulverised, or reduced to a powder by hand pressure when dry. It is usually reinforced with a bonding compound.

When should asbestos be removed?

If the asbestos or ACM is in good condition and undisturbed, it is unlikely that airborne asbestos fibres will be released. In this situation, the risk to health is low.

If asbestos or ACM is found to be in poor condition and there is a risk of exposure to respirable fibres, you will need to take steps to eliminate or minimise the risk. This could include eliminating the risk by removing the asbestos or minimising the risk by encapsulation or other methods.

Where can I find more information and who can I contact?

You can find more detailed information on your requirements on the following websites:

- Ministry of Education:
www.education.govt.nz/school/property-and-transport/health-and-safety-management/asbestos
- WorkSafe:
www.worksafe.govt.nz/asbestos
- Ministry of Health information about the health risks of exposure to asbestos:
www.health.govt.nz/your-health/healthy-living/environmental-health/hazardous-substances/asbestos

If you are unsure whether you have met the requirements of this advice, please email Schoolproperty.Asbestosmanagement@education.govt.nz.

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