

3

Information Sheet

Asbestos and your neighbours



Asbestos and your neighbours

During renovations or demolition of affected houses, asbestos fibres may be released into the air. While the overall health risk in these circumstances may be very low, extra precautions should be taken to reduce the chance of asbestos fibres becoming airborne and subsequently being inhaled. Please do not forget your neighbours.

Under the nuisance provisions of the Health Act (Vic) 1958, any nuisances which are, or are liable to be, offensive or dangerous to health could be investigated by an Environmental Health Officer from your local council.

Dealing with asbestos is the responsibility of the property or home owner unless a contractor has been engaged to do renovation, building or other work.

The removal of asbestos during major renovation or demolition of residential and commercial buildings and structures should be carried out by experienced and licensed asbestos removalists. They will minimise the release of asbestos fibres into the surrounding neighbourhood.

If you suspect that a contractor or licensed asbestos removalist, is not observing safe work practices, report the issue to your state health and safety

authority e.g. WorkSafe, as the business may be breaching the OHS Regulations, 2007. worksafe.vic.gov.au/laws-and-regulations/acts-and-regulations

Specific things to look out for that may suggest a neighbour (or a contractor on their behalf) may not be taking appropriate precautions include: not wetting the asbestos containing material periodically throughout the removal process (this helps keep the dust down), breaking the asbestos containing material up into small pieces, using power tools in the removal process or throwing the material onto the ground.

Note, that as the owner of the property, if you engage a tradesperson, your home becomes their workplace. It is important to alert any tradespeople who come to your house that it contains (or might contain) asbestos and to take precautions to ensure they do not expose themselves or others to asbestos fibres.

If you are concerned about demolition work being carried out close to your home you can take additional precautions such as keeping your windows and doors shut. If your property is in very close proximity to the work being undertaken, avoid working outside during the asbestos removal and clean up, for example avoid gardening and hanging out your washing.

Please note, that if your neighbour needed approval to demolish their home or garage, then there is a requirement for them to advise you prior to commencement of these works – this is one of the conditions of them getting approval. If the application was made

through Council, they are required to give five (5) working days' notice. If the application was made through a Private Certifier, two (2) working days' notice is required to be given. A neighbour is defined as the property on either side, opposite and at the rear of the property in question.

The reason your neighbours are required to notify you prior to commencement of demolition work is to give you the opportunity to organise leaving your house for the day. During a demolition, it is a requirement that asbestos is removed first, so the first day of demolition is the best day to avoid the area where possible. Whether home or not, close all windows and doors and remove all items from your clothesline.

If your neighbour (or a licensed contractor on their behalf) is removing a small amount of asbestos, then there is no requirement to notify neighbours. However, we strongly encourage them to do so.

Asbestos waste materials must be disposed of at authorised landfills. Not all landfills are certified to accept asbestos containing waste materials from residential or commercial building sites. A list of licensed Victorian landfills can be found on the Asbestoswise Information Sheet: *Disposing of Asbestos Yourself*.

Unfortunately in our community, the illegal dumping of asbestos in public places (e.g. footpath, parks) is all too common.

If you see someone illegally dumping asbestos, call your local council or the EPA straight away. If you can, record any details that will assist them in their investigation of the matter, such as the car registration number or address of the offender. If you find illegally

dumped asbestos, also call your local council straight away.

When building materials containing asbestos are burnt, they tend to explode which results in asbestos fibres entering the atmosphere. The public should stay away from fire-damaged premises known to have asbestos until such time as professionals are called in to spray any possible asbestos fibres with a glue-like substance to suppress them.

Call your local council if you are concerned about a burnt-out site near you. Other precautions you can take if it is a neighbouring home that has been burnt, is to close your windows and remove any clothes on your clothesline

- 1 Asbestos and your health
- 2 Asbestos in your home
- 3 Asbestos and your
neighbours**
- 4 Asbestos and rental
properties
- 5 Asbestos information and
support services
- 6 Contracting an asbestos
removalist
- 7 Testing for asbestos
- 8 Disposing of asbestos
yourself