CITY OF CAPE TOWN
ISIXEKO SASEKAPA
STAD KAAPSTAD

TOXIC | ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARD | HEALTH HAZARD | HARMFUL

ASBESTOS

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The term 'asbestos' refers to a group of minerals with extraordinary strength, good thermal and electrical insulation, and fairly good resistance to chemicals.

Breathing in air containing asbestos dust over an extended period of time can lead to the development of asbestos-related disease. Asbestos fibres cannot be absorbed through the skin.

Anyone who disturbs asbestos that has deteriorated or been damaged, resulting in the release of asbestos dust into the air, may be at risk of inhaling asbestos fibres.

Asbestos cement roof sheets

Asbestos cement roof sheets

ASBESTOS WASTE MATERIAL

This may arise from:

- friable (raw) asbestos waste (i.e. material that, when dry, can be crumbled, pulverised or reduced to powder by hand pressure, e.g. raw asbestos, asbestos rope, asbestos insulation), which poses a significant health hazard, as it may easily become airborne and be inhaled; and
- non-friable asbestos waste (i.e. material that, when dry, cannot be crumbled, pulverised or reduced to powder by hand pressure, e.g. asbestos cement products), where the asbestos waste is mostly in the same condition as when manufactured, and is less likely to release asbestos fibres.

USES

Although there is now a ban on the use and sale of asbestos products, asbestos may still be found as used or waste products in the form of seals and gaskets (rope, tape, flanges, etc.), friction products (clutch plates and brake linings), raw asbestos (thermal and acoustic insulation) and, most commonly, cement products (roof sheets, gutters, downpipes, pot plant containers, etc.).

The raw asbestos forms pose the greatest health risk, while the asbestos cement products pose a significantly smaller health risk.

In 2002, a major producer of asbestos cement products switched to producing only asbestos-free products, which replaced the asbestos fibres with synthetic fibres, thereby eliminating the potential health risk.

APPLICABLE NATIONAL LEGISLATION PERTAINING TO ASBESTOS

- Occupational Health and Safety Act, Act 85 of 1993
- Asbestos Regulations, 2001
- Environmental Conservation Act, Act 73 of 1989
- National Environmental Management: Waste Act, Act 59 of 2008
- National Health Act, Act 61 of 2003

Asbestos cement roof sheets

Asbestos cement pipes and gutters

Brown asbestos (friable)

Brown asbestos (friable)

Blue asbestos (friable)

HANDLING AND MAINTENANCE

The general public may occasionally be exposed to asbestos dust when performing work on asbestos-containing products (most likely asbestos cement products).

- Handle all asbestos products (i.e. asbestos cement material) with care, and avoid breakages that may release asbestos dust.
- Do not apply any abrasive techniques when cleaning the asbestos-containing material, e.g. grinding, sanding, dry-brushing.
- Avoid cutting or drilling into asbestos cement material, unless under controlled conditions (e.g. slow-speed cutter using wet methods in addition to wearing a suitable respirator [type FFP2]).
- Keep all asbestos cement products free from moss and lichen growth. Where required, asbestos cement surfaces can be treated with a suitable fungicidal, after which a low-pressure hose and stiff broom can be used to remove all moss and lichens. Thereafter, the asbestos cement surface can be painted or sealed with a suitable protective coating to limit the release of asbestos dust, combat weathering, and inhibit the growth of moss and lichens. Further, it is advisable that a registered asbestos contractor be utilised to clean, treat and seal asbestos cement products, and to handle and remove asbestos waste products in accordance with relevant legislation.

Outer cover is likely a fibreglass mixture covering the underlay of blue asbestos.

Note: Guidelines in identifying and distinguishing asbestos cement products from non-asbestos cement products

- Look for the characteristic white markings against the grey background of the asbestos cement products, which signify the presence of white asbestos. These markings are notable on the underside of flat or corrugated asbestos cement products.
- Damaged (cracked) asbestos cement products may reveal white asbestos fibres protruding from the cement binding material. In the event of older asbestos cement products, blue or brown asbestos fibres may be noted.
- Non-asbestos cement products have neither the characteristic white markings nor the protrusion of any asbestos fibres in the event of damage. (Note: Any material protruding from the composite material is likely to be organic and/or synthetic fibres that do not contain asbestos. Further, the non-asbestos products have a more consistent, lighter grey colour as opposed to asbestos-containing cement products.

Blue asbestos lagging attached to ventilation duct.

DISPOSAL

The City of Cape Town disposes of asbestos-containing waste in a trenched, co-disposal operation in a permitted low-hazard (H:h) landfill site at Vissershok, in accordance with applicable legislation.

- Prior to disposal, it is advisable to keep damaged asbestos-containing products adequately wetted and wrapped in plastic. Where required, place all asbestos cement fragments into a suitable heavy-duty plastic bag closed with cable ties. All other forms of asbestos to be disposed of should also be suitably bagged prior to disposal.
- When asbestos-containing waste is brought to a drop-off point, ensure that it is kept separate from other general waste being disposed. In addition, notify the responsible official of the presence of any asbestos-containing waste. The responsible official will ensure that it is safely disposed of in a separate container.
- Under specific working conditions (i.e. demolition/construction work), it is a legal requirement that the services of a registered asbestos contractor be obtained to remove and dispose of asbestos-containing waste. Details of registered asbestos contractors with valid registrations can be obtained from the Department of Labour's Western Cape office on 021 441 8158.

Next to the bag containing blue asbestos waste, the spray tank used to wet the asbestos lagging before stripping.

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For more information contact: 0860 103 089 or go to www.capetown.gov.za/solidwaste

PLEASE NOTE: This leaflet is also available in Afrikaans and Xhosa on request.
Hierdie pamflet is ook op versoek in Afrikaans en Xhosa beskikbaar.
Esi sibhengezo siyafumaneka nangesiBhulu nesiXhosa xa siceliwe.

Making progress possible. Together.