

Asbestos Management Fact Sheet

Health and safety of patients, staff and construction workers are a priority for the RHH Redevelopment project.

Asbestos in building products is an issue that all States and Territories are dealing with. The presence of asbestos in old buildings like the RHH is well known and is being actively managed during RHH Redevelopment works.

What is asbestos?

Asbestos are a group of natural occurring minerals. They have strong fibres that don't burn which are why they were used in building materials up until the 1980s.

Where is asbestos used?

Asbestos is found in many areas of houses built or refurbished before the 1990s including in roofing, guttering, vinyl flooring, wall sheeting and many other products.

Similarly, asbestos can be found in similar products in public and commercial buildings. Asbestos containing materials can be found in some ceilings, vinyl, riser shafts and the services tunnel at the RHH for example.

When is asbestos a problem?

Asbestos is not a risk if it is intact and undisturbed in building materials.

Building materials that are loose or crumbling and where fibres can easily be released into the air need to be removed or remediated.

Where practical, materials containing asbestos have been removed from the areas being refurbished for the RHH Redevelopment. There are some cases where it has not been practical to remove the asbestos, for example, where it is embedded within the building structure. In these cases the asbestos containing materials have been encapsulated.

How are construction works safe?

- The RHH asbestos register provides information on known and suspected areas containing asbestos materials and this has been given to the Managing Contractor to assist them plan works.

- Subcontractors receive site induction from the Managing Contractor including asbestos awareness.
- If there is any doubt about whether a building material contains asbestos, works are stopped until investigations confirm it is safe to continue.
- Air monitoring adjacent to construction zones occurs daily.
- The removal of asbestos only occurs within an enclosed construction zone. The construction zone also has an ante-room which is a space between the construction zone and a public area.
- The construction zone has signage that indicates hazardous materials are being removed within the area.
- Only authorised personnel are able to enter the enclosed construction zone.
- The contractors responsible for removing asbestos are licensed to do the work.
- Contractors are required to wear full personal protective equipment.
- A range of specialised equipment is used depending on the type of removal works occurring.
- Materials to be removed are sealed in specialised disposal bags in the construction zone. Bagged materials, and the protective clothing worn by contractors, are bagged a second time in the ante-room.
- Double-bagged materials are removed from the site in an enclosed rigid garbage transport vessel.
- Refurbished areas are inspected by an independent industry hygienist to verify the areas are clean and safe for works to proceed after the asbestos has been removed.

What you can do if you have further concerns?

Staff who notice any dust or debris in or around construction areas are asked to advise their manager immediately.

Email the RHH Redevelopment project – redemption.rhh@dhhs.tas.gov.au