

Workplace Health and Safety Queensland

Asbestos – Low density asbestos fibre board

Purpose

This fact sheet provides information about low density asbestos fibre board.

What is low density asbestos fibre board?

Low density asbestos fibre board is a lightly compressed board which looks similar to asbestos cement sheeting or plaster board. It is also sometimes referred to as asbestos insulating board. Generally, low density asbestos fibre board was manufactured as a flat sheet product although some perforated sheeting typically used for acoustic ceiling applications was also manufactured. The most common example of low density asbestos fibre board is 'Asbestolux', a product formerly manufactured by James Hardie Pty Ltd.



Photograph 1: Asbestolux

Samples of low density asbestos fibre board have shown it contains up to 70 per cent (by volume) asbestos fibres and is generally composed of brown asbestos (amosite) and white asbestos (chrysotile) in a calcium silicate plaster. The asbestos fibres are not bound in a cement matrix as with asbestos cement sheeting.

Low density asbestos fibre board is often soft and the pressure of a fingernail pushed into the surface can leave an indentation.



Photograph 2: Low density asbestos fibre board

Where is low density asbestos fibre board typically found?

Low density asbestos fibre board was typically used for wall and ceiling panels, often in high humidity applications. It has been used for fire protection, thermal and acoustic insulation and for general building work in industrial and commercial buildings, education facilities and domestic premises. It was manufactured in the late 1950s to mid-1960s and is unlikely to be found in buildings constructed after 1982.

What is the risk of exposure from low density asbestos fibre board?

Low density asbestos fibre board is softer than asbestos cement sheeting and will crumble easily if disturbed. If the material is in good condition and left undisturbed, it presents a low risk to building occupants. However, release of airborne fibres can occur even with minor mechanical disturbance.

During maintenance activities the potential for asbestos fibres to be released is high if low density asbestos fibre board is broken, removed or disturbed without adequate precautions.

Removal work

Due to the high percentage of asbestos fibres present in low density asbestos fibre board and the soft nature of the product, low density asbestos fibre board is regarded as a friable asbestos containing material. Friable asbestos containing material must only be removed by an 'A' class certificate holder and performed in accordance with the *Code of Practice for the Safe Removal of Asbestos 2nd ed.* [NOHSC:2002 (2005)].

Maintenance work

It is essential to establish whether maintenance work can be performed without disturbing low density asbestos fibre board. Sawing, drilling or cutting into this material will result in significant fibre release. Therefore, any maintenance work carried out on or around low density asbestos fibre board must be planned and precautions taken to prevent exposure to airborne asbestos fibres.

Maintenance and service tasks on or around low density asbestos fibre board can only be carried out after a competent person has assessed the material and proposed task to determine the level of risk and appropriate control measures.

The register of asbestos containing material

It is the legal responsibility for the owner of a workplace built under an approval given by a local government before 1 January 1990 to ensure that, as far as practicable, all asbestos containing materials in the workplace are identified, assessed and documented in a register for asbestos containing material.

The location of any low density asbestos fibre board in a workplace, or low density board presumed to contain asbestos, must be recorded in the register of asbestos containing material. The type (i.e. friable), condition (i.e. damaged or intact) and type of asbestos contained in the low density asbestos fibre board must also be recorded in the asbestos register.

For more information

Visit www.worksafe.qld.gov.au or call the Workplace Health and Safety Infoline on 1300 369 915.

Visit the website to download:

- *Identifying and recording asbestos in the workplace* fact sheet
- *Air monitoring when removing asbestos* fact sheet
- *Clearance inspections for asbestos work areas* fact sheet
- *Asbestos flooring* fact sheet
- *Code of Practice for the Management and Control of Asbestos in Workplaces*
- *Code of Practice for the Safe Removal of Asbestos 2nd edition*
- *Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995*
- *Workplace Health and Safety Regulation 2008.*

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