



SAFETY ALERT High Pressure Water Spray on Asbestos Roof #2/2018

Good Afternoon ALL. The alert relates to information from WorkSafe Qld. Can you please forward to all congregations?

An important reminder to:

- Take required safety measures around any asbestos containing materials;
- Regularly check your premises for cracks or disintegration of the condition of any asbestos containing materials;
- Never clean any asbestos containing material with high pressure water spray

High pressure water spray on asbestos roof

In April 2018, a contractor used a high pressure water spray on a roof believed to be asbestos containing material (ACM) which he had been engaged to clean and repaint. ACM debris was distributed throughout part of the property and the neighbouring property.

The site was made safe, including an area where run-off from the roof downpipes had resulted in ACM debris being deposited into the road guttering. The contractor was issued an improvement notice to remediate the site through an A Class licensed asbestos removalist. Workplace Health and Safety Queensland will monitor the site until the work is complete and relevant clearances obtained.

Preventing a similar incident

A PCBU has a duty to ensure that workers and others are not exposed to the risk of airborne asbestos. The person with management or control of the workplace (PMCW) must take all reasonable steps to ensure that any ACM has been identified at the workplace. If the PMCW cannot identify ACM, but a competent person reasonably believes materials may contain asbestos, then the PMCW must assume asbestos is present.

The PMCW must also ensure that the presence and location of asbestos is indicated, and an asbestos register and an asbestos management plan is kept at the workplace.

Cleaning a fibrous cement sheeting roof with a high-pressure water spray can destroy the roof surface, causing cement debris and asbestos to spray into the air and result in widespread contamination.

A PCBU must not use, or direct or allow a worker to use, high pressure spray on asbestos or ACM.

When working on buildings constructed before 1990, it is likely asbestos will be present in roofing and other sheet materials used in the construction of the building. Control measures that may be considered to prevent airborne asbestos fibres include:

- not disturbing roofing materials that may contain asbestos
- not using a high-pressure water spray or any other powered equipment to clean an asbestos roof
- using a chemical fungicide, sealant, and then acrylic roof paint
- replacing the ACM materials or roof sheeting.

Where there is a need to remove more than 10m² of non-friable asbestos, a licensed asbestos removalist must be engaged.

Statistics

Between January 2017 and January 2018, Workplace Health and Safety Queensland responded to seven events where high pressure water was used to clean an asbestos roof. A similar number of events occurred in the three years prior to this.

Prosecutions and compliance

In October and November 2017, two sole traders contracted to clean and paint the roofs of two houses were both fined \$420. The contractors used a high-pressure water spray on the Super Six roof which scattered asbestos debris across the yard and onto the footpaths. It also cost the sole traders \$7000 and \$9000 respectively to clean up the asbestos debris.

In July 2017, a sole trader who was contracted to clean and paint the roof of a house was fined \$750. The contractor used a high-pressure water spray on the Super Six roof which scattered asbestos debris across the yard and two neighbouring properties. The defendant was also placed on a \$1000, 12 month good behaviour bond. In addition to penalties imposed by the court the defendant also faced clean-up costs in excess of \$18,000.

In 2014 two PCBUs were fined \$750 each and placed on \$1000, 12 month good behaviour bonds, after pleading guilty to using high-pressure water spray on asbestos containing roofs resulting in contamination of neighbouring properties. In addition to penalties imposed by the court, the defendants faced clean-up costs of \$35,000 and \$50,000 respectively.

Several events involving the use of high pressure water on ACM are currently under investigation and are likely to result in fines for the PCBUs and clean-up costs.

More Information

- [How to Safely Remove Asbestos Code of Practice 2011](#) (PDF, 784.57 KB)
- [Demolition Work Code of Practice 2013](#) (PDF, 440.6 KB)

Many thanks and please call if you require assistance to Qld Synod Work Health and Safety Manager 0439 139 171