Northern Territory
Environment Protection Authority

Asbestos Disposal in the Northern Territory

Information on the requirements for the disposal of Asbestos in the Northern Territory

Scope

These guidance notes have been developed to assist industry, local government, consultants and other relevant parties that need to consider options for disposal of asbestos in the Northern Territory (NT). These guidance notes relate only to the **disposal** of asbestos.

Principles

The Northern Territory Environment Protection Authority's (NT EPA) priority is to ensure that waste management and disposal activities achieve the best environmental outcome. In the Northern Territory waste management, pollution prevention and control is legislated under the *Waste Management and Pollution Control Act* (WMPC Act). Asbestos is a Listed Waste under Schedule 2 of Waste Management and Pollution Control (Administration) Regulations and therefore an Approval and/or Licence is required under the WMPC Act for the construction and/or operation of a premise associated with the collection, storage and disposal of asbestos.

The NT EPA's preferred position on the disposal of asbestos is that asbestos should be disposed of promptly to a landfill licensed to receive it. Given the remoteness of communities and transport distances in NT other options such as temporary storage and on-site containment cells may also be considered. These systems must be regarded as secondary systems.

Introduction

Asbestos is a naturally occurring mineral fibre that was widely used in building materials up to 1985. The most commonly found building materials that contain asbestos are asbestos cement products, e.g. fibro sheeting (flat and corrugated), water, drainage and flue pipes, roofing shingles and guttering.

The manufacture and distribution of all forms of asbestos has been banned nationally since 31 December 2003.

It is often very difficult to identify the presence of asbestos by sight. The only way to be certain is to have a sample of the material analysed by a laboratory. Sampling of anything you suspect may contain asbestos is itself hazardous and must only be done by a competent person, and analysed only in accredited laboratories.

More information on identifying asbestos and where this can be done is available from the National Association of Testing Authorities (NATA)

All removal of asbestos-containing material must be undertaken in compliance with the *National Code of Practice for the Safe Removal of Asbestos* 2nd Edition [NOHSC:2002 (2005)].

All maintenance tasks that impact upon asbestos containing material must be undertaken in compliance with the *National Code of Practice for the Management and Control of Asbestos in Workplaces* [NOHSC: 2018 (2005)].

Other legislative requirements with regard to workplace health and safety obligations relating to asbestos include:

- *Workplace Health and Safety Act* administered by NT WorkSafe, imposes obligations on people at workplaces to ensure workplace health and safety.
- *National Code of Practice for the Management and Control of Asbestos in Workplaces* (asbestos management code) (PDF, 805 KB)
- *National Code of Practice for the Safe Removal of Asbestos* 2nd Edition (asbestos removal code) (PDF, 1546 KB)

Information on the health effects and workplace management practices relating to asbestos should be obtained from the relevant government agencies.

Approvals and Licensing Requirements

Landfills

All new landfills or expansions to existing landfills require an Environmental Protection Approval under the WMPC Act prior to construction. An application form and guide can be downloaded from: http://www.ntepa/environment/licences/guides.html

In addition to an Environmental Protection Approval, all new and existing landfills, regardless of serviceable population size, that accept asbestos require an Environmental Protection Licence under the WMPC Act prior to the acceptance of asbestos. An application form and guide can be downloaded from: http://www.ntepa/environment/licences/guides.html

Temporary Storage

All new temporary storage facilities or expansions to existing storage facilities associated with the collection, storage, treatment and disposal of asbestos on a commercial or fee for service basis requires an Environmental Protection Approval under the WMPC Act prior to construction. An application form and guide can be downloaded from: http://www.ntepa/environment/licences/guides.html

In addition to an Environmental Protection Approval, all temporary storage facilities designed to accept asbestos require an Environmental Protection Licence under the WMPC Act prior to the acceptance of asbestos. An application form and guide can be downloaded from: http://www.ntepa/environment/licences/guides.html

Collection and Transport

The collection and transport of asbestos requires an Environmental Protection Licence under the WMPC Act prior to the collection of asbestos. An application form and guide can be downloaded from: http://www.ntepa//environment/licences/guides.html

Site Management Requirements

Landfills

All new landfills, regardless of serviceable population size, must be sited, designed and managed in accordance with the Guidelines for the Siting, Design and Management of Solid Waste Disposal Sites in the Northern Territory available on the NT EPA website.

All landfills must be within a secure compound with a perimeter fence of at least 1.8m high wire mesh, a lockable entrance with signage detailing the following:

- Approval/Licence holder and number;
- Hours of operation;
- Type of waste accepted;
- 24 hour contact details; and
- Access is prohibited to unauthorised users.

All landfills, regardless of serviceable population size, licensed to accept asbestos must have a designated area or trench (monocell) for the acceptance of ONLY asbestos contaminated material (ACM).

Disposal Requirements

1. Each load of asbestos waste must be covered with a suitable inert material immediately after it has been deposited.
2. The licensee must keep records of the volume and GPS coordinates of all asbestos disposed of by burial. These records are to be made available to an Authorised Officer upon request.
3. Asbestos waste shall be deposited in a position which is:
   a. in the case of asbestos fibre and dust wastes, at least three metres
   b. in the case of stabilised asbestos wastes in a bonded matrix, at least one metre beneath the planned final land surface in such a manner that they do not come into direct contact with compaction or earthmoving equipment.
4. Asbestos waste being deposited of in accordance with Clause 3. must be covered finally by:
   a. in the case of asbestos fibre and dust wastes, orange marker mesh identifying that asbestos is buried below and not less than three metres of compacted material.
   b. in the case of stabilised asbestos wastes in a bonded matrix, orange marker mesh identifying that asbestos is buried below and not less than one metre of compacted material.

All asbestos landfills are required to place the following information of the land title:

- cadastral boundaries of asbestos landfill;
- quantities of asbestos buried at the site;
- caution against the disturbance of the area.

All landfills require a closure and post closure plan detailing the revegetation program and ongoing management and maintenance requirements for the site. All species used in revegetation programs should be sourced from local provenance.

Temporary Storage Facilities

Temporary storage may be deemed acceptable in cases where storage is short term (<1 year) and an asbestos action plan is developed for its management. Management plans must include consideration of access to and egress from the storage facility, timelines and intended landfill destination. A shipping container is an example of a temporary storage facility.

All temporary storage facilities must be within a secure compound with a perimeter fence of at least 1.8m high wire mesh, a lockable entrance with signage detailing the following:

- Approval/Licence holder and number;
- Hours of operation;
- Type of waste accepted;
- 24 hour contact details; and
- Access is prohibited to unauthorised users.

All temporary storage facilities licensed to accept asbestos must have a designated secure container/s for the acceptance of ONLY asbestos contaminated material (ACM).

Storage Requirements

1. All containers must be locked and placarded with signage specifying that ACM is inside and that access is prohibited to unauthorised users. Once containers are full they are not to be disturbed.
2. ACM is to be handled in accordance with Australian Standards and Codes of Practice for the management, control and removal of asbestos, with all materials securely wrapped in plastic.
3. Placement of ACM inside of containers must ensure that any previously placed ACM is not disturbed and the integrity of plastic wrapping is not compromised.
4. The time frame for temporary storage should not exceed 12 months after which time the containers must be disposed of in a suitably licensed landfill in accordance with the disposal requirements specified under landfills above.
5. All containers must be monitored throughout the duration of temporary storage to ensure the integrity of the containers is maintained.

On-site Containment Cells

This may be considered provided there is sufficient management control, transfer of information and other safeguards to ensure that material is not disturbed, particularly in a sensitive setting, e.g. nearby residential areas.

For this option to be considered a detailed appraisal of the site must be completed. The appraisal must address and/or include:

- A detailed geotechnical and hydrogeological assessment;
- Set backs, exclusion zones and buffer zones to accommodate surrounding land uses and environmental values;
- Topography and surface characteristics; and
- Subsurface conditions.

The minimum functional components of an on-site containment cell must be determined on a case by case basis, its design must take into account potential exposure pathways and **receptors.**

Definitions

Asbestos-containing material (ACM) is any material, object, product or debris that contains asbestos.

Asbestos Waste means all removed ACM and disposable items used during the asbestos removal work, such as plastic sheeting used for an enclosure or to cover surfaces in the asbestos work area, disposable coveralls, disposable respirators and rags used for cleaning.

Non-friable asbestos is the most common form, usually found as cement sheeting (either flat or corrugated), vinyl floor tiles, water or flue pipes, or other asbestos bonded products. If left undisturbed, non-friable asbestos presents no health risks.

Non-friable asbestos waste is sub divided into two categories taking into account the type and nature of ACM likely to be encountered.

- Category I Non-friable ACM: Means asbestos containing packing, gaskets, resilient floor covering and asphalt roofing products containing more than 1% asbestos
- Category II Non-friable ACM: Means any material, excluding Category I non-friable material, containing more than 1% asbestos that when dry cannot be crumbled, pulverized, or reduced to powder by hand pressure or by mechanical forces expected to act on the material.

Friable asbestos was used in pipe lagging, insulation, and asbestos backed floor tiles and presents a significant health risks if disturbed. It also includes ACM which, when dry, is or may become crumbled, pulverised or reduced to powder by hand pressure. This may include ACM that have been subjected to conditions that leave them in a state where they meet the above definition, such as weathering, physical damage, water damage etc.

For more information, contact:

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