

## Workplace Health and Safety Queensland

### Air monitoring when removing asbestos

#### Purpose

This fact sheet describes the requirements for air monitoring when removing asbestos containing materials in the workplace.

#### What is air monitoring?

Air monitoring means airborne asbestos fibre sampling to assist in assessing exposures and the effectiveness of control measures. Air monitoring includes exposure, control and clearance monitoring.

All air monitoring must be undertaken in accordance with the *Guidance note on the membrane filter method for estimating airborne asbestos fibres* available at [Safe Work Australia](#).

#### Who can conduct air monitoring?

A person who is competent to conduct air monitoring during asbestos removal should be:

- experienced and knowledgeable in the asbestos removal industry
- competent with operating monitoring equipment such as sampling pumps
- able to implement the most appropriate sampling strategy and place sampling pumps in the correct locations
- able to adequately store and transport samples prior to analysis.

An occupational hygienist would be competent to conduct air monitoring for asbestos fibres. People new to dust sampling and analysis must not undertake the work without making personal contact with an experienced occupational hygienist or scientist to obtain the essential training in the techniques involved.

#### Who is responsible for arranging air monitoring requirements?

For asbestos removal at a workplace, the person who commissions the asbestos removal work is responsible for arranging a

competent person to determine air monitoring requirements.

Where the asbestos removal work is being undertaken at domestic premises, the person engaged to do the asbestos removal work is responsible for arranging a competent person to determine air monitoring requirements.

#### When is air monitoring required?

A competent person who is independent of the asbestos removal work must determine all air monitoring requirements.

Engagement of a competent person and deciding on the air monitoring requirements must occur before removal work commences.

The competent person must determine:

- the location, rate and frequency of sampling
- whether it is necessary to monitor air quality in areas adjacent to, above and below the asbestos work area
- whether additional routine air sampling is warranted (e.g. in nearby high-occupancy areas)
- whether an air monitoring program is required.

An air monitoring program is not always necessary for the removal of bonded asbestos material, however, it is regarded as good occupational hygiene practice. Air monitoring is required during the removal of bonded asbestos material that is friable (easily broken) as a result of the work process. This requires an assessment by a competent person prior to removal work commencing.

Written air monitoring programs must be developed by the competent person for all indoor removals of friable asbestos and for all outdoor removal where there might be a risk to other people.

## What is control monitoring?

Control monitoring means air monitoring using static or positional instruments to measure the level of airborne asbestos fibres in an area during work on asbestos containing material.

Static or positional samples are taken at fixed locations which are usually between one and two metres above floor level.

Control monitoring is designed to assist in assessing the effectiveness of any implemented control measures. These monitoring results are not representative of actual occupational exposures, and should not be used for that purpose. The results of control monitoring cannot be used to compare with the national exposure standard. Levels for control monitoring and action required are set out in the *Code of Practice for the Safe Removal of Asbestos 2<sup>nd</sup> edition*.

## What is exposure monitoring?

Exposure monitoring involves taking air samples within the breathing zone to determine a person's risk from, or level of exposure to, airborne asbestos fibres. This method is intended to be used for the sampling of airborne asbestos fibres in occupational environments where the airborne fibres are known to predominantly be asbestos. Exposure monitoring is designed to reliably estimate a person's exposure to asbestos, so that it may be compared with the national exposure standard.

Exposure monitoring includes airborne asbestos fibre sampling, analysis, estimation of time-weighted average exposure and interpretation. Samples are taken within the breathing zone and are usually obtained by fastening a filter holder to the worker's jacket lapel.

## What is clearance monitoring?

Clearance monitoring means air monitoring using static or positional samples to measure the level of airborne asbestos fibres in an area after work on asbestos containing material has been completed and the area decontaminated and dried.

For jobs involving an enclosed area, clearance monitoring must be done within the enclosed area following the completion of the removal work but prior to the removal of the enclosure. It must also be done again after the removal of the enclosure (for a final clearance inspection). An area is 'cleared' when the level of airborne asbestos fibres is measured as being below 0.01 fibres/mL.

## Who can analyse the air monitoring samples?

Air monitoring samples must be analysed by an approved National Association of Testing Authorities (NATA) analyst. The [NATA website](#) lists accredited laboratories to perform asbestos analysis.

## For more information

Visit [www.worksafe.qld.gov.au](http://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
- *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 2<sup>nd</sup> edition*
- *Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995*
- *Workplace Health and Safety Regulation 2008*.

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