

Communications Guidance for Asbestos Management



Building materials containing asbestos were in widespread use in New Zealand and overseas until the 1980s because of its fire-resistant properties. Given the age of the school portfolio, asbestos or asbestos containing materials (ACMs) might be present in many schools.

Where asbestos is left in place and is in good condition, it does not pose a significant health and safety risk. However if it is disturbed during refurbishment or demolition, there is a risk of asbestos fibres becoming airborne and creating a health risk.

At times, it becomes necessary to undertake maintenance or refurbishment works which may involve asbestos removal. As a PCBU with management or control of a workplace, schools have a duty under the Health and Safety at Work (Asbestos) Regulations 2016 to inform certain persons about intended asbestos removal work.

Who do I need to inform?

You need to inform any person who may be affected by the works. This may include:

- The school community including students (via parents), staff and others who regularly visit or work within the school environment. Even if the works are occurring out of hours, you should ensure these persons are notified.
- Consider others who may be affected such as neighbouring properties.

What is the best way to do this?

There are many ways to communicate. However you decide to do this, it should be timely and effective. Consider who your audience is and the best way to ensure key messages are delivered and understood. If you regularly communicate with parents in a particular way, continue to do this. Consultation meetings and forums will provide an opportunity for persons with concerns to discuss issues and raise questions. It is not always necessary to hold these meetings. You will need to make this decision based on your audience and the project at hand. Some other ideas on how you might communicate include:

Parents, Students, Staff

- Regular notices and updates on Facebook Page/Social Media;
- Email;
- School Newsletters;
- Consultation Meetings/Forums.

Neighbouring Properties

- Notice of intended works delivered by letterbox drop;
- Invitation to attend consultation meetings/forums.

What information do I need to provide?

Timing of communications can be critical. Always ensure that:

- Communications occur prior to the work commencing;
- Describe what is involved and when the work will start and finish;
- Outline what the safety measures will be.

An example Notice of Asbestos Removal Work is provided. This is a useful tool which may be tailored to suit your specific project when informing the school and affected community.