



URGENT SOLUTIONS TO URGENT PROBLEMS

ASBESTOS IN SOIL

In NSW WorkCover regulates asbestos. WorkCover's system for controlling the industry is to issue improvement and prohibition notices which can, on the spot, close down work on a site. WorkCover doesn't have to prosecute to close down a site. Failure to comply with such a notice can bring a fine of up to \$165,000.

There are different requirements applied depending on whether the asbestos is bonded or friable.

- **Bonded asbestos** has the asbestos fibres incorporated in such a way that they cannot be released by crushing the material by hand when it is dry.
- **Friable asbestos** materials can be crumbled by hand, releasing asbestos fibres.

The requirements are naturally more stringent for friable asbestos than for bonded asbestos. Friable asbestos must be removed by a contractor who has an AS1 licence. The removal must be conducted with NATA accredited airborne fibre monitoring. Seven days notice must be provided to WorkCover prior to job commencement. The protocols which must be followed are more expensive than those for bonded asbestos.

Faced with a problem of some builders using an excavator to knock down old fibro buildings instead of doing the work properly, and the difficulties of catching the demolition in the act, WorkCover have taken the step of declaring any "Asbestos inappropriately buried (ie not in accordance to any environmental legislative requirements) is considered friable asbestos material. Any asbestos cement product, which has been subjected to weathering, severely damaged by hail, damaged by heat/fire or other mechanical action, or illegal water blasting is a friable asbestos product."

The transport and disposal of waste material containing asbestos is regulated by the NSW Department of Environment and Conservation.

It is very common to find broken pieces of asbestos cement (AC) sheeting in or on the ground. Just what level of removal is considered satisfactory varies depending on the organisation giving the clearance. The Occupational Health and Safety Act 2000 and its Regulation 2001 which come under WorkCover's jurisdiction apply to premises where the definition of premises includes land.



**GETEX
PTY LIMITED**

ABN 99 116 287 471
Suite 2.02, Building 2,
Waterloo Business Park
35 Waterloo Road
North Ryde NSW 2113
Phone: (02) 9889 2488
Fax: (02) 9889 2499
Email: help@getex.com.au
Web: www.getex.com.au



HIA members
the best in the business



The NSW Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997 places responsibility for regulation of pollution or contamination of land on Councils, and is generally applied to cases where there is not a workplace issue. The Contaminated Land Management Act 1997 does not mention asbestos in soil, and there are no NSW Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) guidelines for asbestos in soil, however the Act is often applied via the Contaminated Land Site Auditor System. This typically has the effect of increasing costs manyfold. A recent document "Management of asbestos in the non-occupational environment" by enHEALTH, Federal Department of Health and Ageing 2005, attempts to provide some framework, however, many practical problems remain. The difficulties include those related to the method of deciding whether a site can be declared suitably free of asbestos, such as the appropriate number of samples to be analysed. Because asbestos almost always occurs in clumps, lumps or pieces, even at a microscopic level, **GETEX** considers that the best method is a thorough visual examination, supported where applicable by sampling and analysis. Because of the clumping problem, NATA accreditation cannot be obtained for determination of the percentage of asbestos in a sample. The environmental people, coming from a background of reasonably homogeneous dispersal of chemical contaminants, rather than contaminants occurring in lumps, tend to favour a program of increased sampling and analysis, which does increase costs.

*The issue can be difficult and often affected by factors such as public relations, which Department is most in evidence on the job, and various people related considerations. The staff at **GETEX** have long combined experience with asbestos in soil projects and can advise on the best course of action. **GETEX** can provide all the associated services needed for a successful project outcome.*

**Contact GETEX for assistance with your
Asbestos in Soil Problem**

**GETEX OPERATES 24/7
02 9889 2488**