

Managing asbestos in WA public schools

Quick facts:

- About 600 of the 809 public schools in Western Australia were built before 1993, and may have asbestos-containing materials in some areas.
- Environmental health experts advise that undisturbed asbestos-containing materials in good condition pose a low risk to health.
- Where asbestos-containing material is no longer functional or presents an unacceptable health risk it is remediated or replaced with a suitable alternative product.
- Removal of asbestos-containing material is undertaken by licenced contractors under controlled conditions to ensure its removal does not present a risk to staff and students.
- All recorded asbestos roofing in public schools has been removed and replaced with suitable materials.
- Inspections of public schools to identify the location and condition of asbestos-containing materials are performed on a regular, periodic basis at intervals not exceeding three years.

Overview:

According to the national Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency, approximately one third of all homes built in Australia contain asbestos product, particularly those built before the mid-1980s.

Western Australian public schools are checked regularly for asbestos by independent inspectors engaged by the Department of Finance's Building Management and Works. Where issues are found that need urgent attention, works are planned and carried out when staff and students are not present in the asbestos work area.

Risk rankings:

When independent inspectors assess schools, they examine the condition of any asbestos-containing material and allocate a risk ranking. Risk ranking one is the most serious, with nine the least serious.

Risk ranking one means: Unsealed asbestos or coating damaged, severely weathered. High probability of disturbance.

Risk ranking nine means: Sealed asbestos, coating in good condition and/or unweathered and surface sound and well bound. Low probability of disturbance.



What schools do:

Each school has an Asbestos-containing Materials Register. Details of any asbestos, its location in the school and condition of the material are recorded on the register.

Building contractors and workers, including any tradespeople and volunteers, who carry out work at the school **must** consult the register before work starts so it can be carried out safely and according to appropriate standards.

Accompanying the register is the Department's Asbestos Management Plan which provides school staff with an overview and understanding of how to manage asbestos containing materials that may exist in public schools.

In the event of an incident involving asbestos-containing materials, a principal should refer to the Asbestos Management Plan in the first instance. A principal can also contact Environmental Health staff in the Department of Education and the Department of Finance's Building Management and Works if they have any health and safety concerns. Qualified officers can be dispatched quickly, through the Department of Finance's Building Management and Works, to assess the issue and fix it if needed.

Related information:

[Building our schools](#)

References:

[Australian Government Asbestos Safety and Eradication Authority](#)

[Asbestos - A guide for householders and the general public \(Department of Health\)](#)

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