

The health and safety of Liverpool Hospital patients, visitors and staff is a priority for the Liverpool Health and Academic Precinct (LHAP) team. This fact sheet outlines how the LHAP team is managing asbestos during construction.

What is asbestos?

Asbestos is a group of natural occurring minerals. It was used as a reliable and durable construction material up until the 1980s. Asbestos materials possess strong fibres and are fire-resistant, which is why they were used in building materials. The material is found in many houses and buildings built before the 1990s, including in roofing, guttering, vinyl flooring, wall sheeting and many other products.

Is my health at risk if there is asbestos at my workplace?

Asbestos fibres can pose a risk to health if they become airborne, as inhalation is the main way that asbestos enters the body. Small quantities of asbestos fibres are present in the air at all times. Most people are exposed to very small amounts of asbestos and do not develop asbestos-related health problems.

People who have suffered health effects from exposure to asbestos have generally worked in either the asbestos mining or milling industry, worked in industries involved in making or installing asbestos products, or are from the immediate families of these people. In all of these situations there was exposure to high levels of airborne dust, from either the processes involved or from the clothes of the workers. This was before disposable protective clothing requirements and other measures were introduced.

Am I safe to walk near asbestos works?

Yes. All works where hazardous material, notably asbestos, may be present are carried out in accordance with legislative requirements by competent persons. During asbestos removal works, defined legislative procedures and methodologies are implemented. For passers-by, this is managed by exclusion zones providing a set-back from the main construction site fence line, along with active air monitoring. The workers within these exclusion zones are qualified professionals, who are experts in asbestos management planning, identification, remediation and disposal. They will be wearing protective clothing, such as respirators, fully disposable coveralls, gloves and footwear which are a regulatory requirement and keep them safe as they have direct contact with hazardous material.

Our approach to asbestos management incorporates measures to protect people outside the exclusion zone. For example, extensive air quality monitoring and the use of water and/or 'dust block' to seal dirt. All works that are undertaken by these qualified professionals are overseen by the Principal Contractor's independent accredited consultants, ensuring compliance with all defined requirements.

How is asbestos managed?

As part of a comprehensive management strategy of asbestos, the LHAP team and South Western Sydney Local Health District (SWSLHD) have undertaken various Environmental Site Assessments and a site-wide asbestos quantification assessment. The Asbestos Management Plan documents the procedures and controls required to be implemented during asbestos remediation works. SWSLHD will control the Long Term Environmental Management Plan for the redeveloped areas once the project has been completed. The comprehensive management approach follows the Australian legislative and best practice model. The seven steps in the management process include Preliminary Environmental Site Assessment, Detailed Environmental Site Assessment/Asbestos Quantification Assessment, Asbestos Management Plan, Remedial Action Plan(s), Remediation and Validation, Site Validation Report, Assessment and remediation reporting.

Concerns or questions?

If you have concerns or questions, or if you identify any hazards, please contact the LHAP team by phone on (02) 8738 6670 or email SWSLHD-LHAP@health.nsw.gov.au

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