

10.11 ASBESTOS

Hazard

Asbestos, in poor condition or disturbed, can release fibres into the air – if you inhale them, there is a risk that you could develop medical conditions or diseases.

Principles

- ⇒ Consider asbestos as a hazard at all incidents.
- ⇒ If presence cannot be determined, assume present.
- ⇒ Implement control measures in the Hot Zone when there is friable asbestos, or if non-friable asbestos is disturbed. (Non-friable asbestos does not present a risk if undisturbed.)
- ⇒ Choose control measures depending on type of asbestos, quantity, and level of interaction.
- ⇒ Decontaminate people and equipment leaving Hot Zone.
- ⇒ Report asbestos hazards to FireCOM and everyone at the incident.
- ⇒ Hand over the site at incident termination to owner of the site or the waste.
- ⇒ Ensure other agencies are notified through FireCOM.
- ⇒ Report in eAIRs. NIIENMs are not required unless control measures failed or were inadequate.

Arrival

- Determine if asbestos may be a hazard. Consider:
 - Material involved
 - Age of the material
 - Asbestos register, if available
 - Pre-incident plans or advice from owner or occupier.
- If asbestos is present, determine level of risk. Consider:
 - Type (friable/non-friable)
 - Quantity and location
 - Incident factors that may impact the material
 - Whether firefighters will interact with it.
- Notify FireCOM of the type and nature of incident, for agency notifications.

ACM (*asbestos containing material*) – a material that contains asbestos.

Friable asbestos – any asbestos containing material is powder form, or that can be crumbled, pulverised, or reduced to powder by hand pressure when dry – eg loose-fill insulation, pipe lagging, fire-damaged asbestos containing material.

Non-friable asbestos – any asbestos containing material that is not friable, including materials containing asbestos fibres reinforced with a bonding compound – eg fibre cement sheeting, corrugated fibre cement, electrical switchboards.

Control measures

- ☐ Ensure PPE in the Hot Zone is appropriate to the risk and incident type.
- ☐ Implement dust suppression tactics.
- ☐ Minimise entry into the Hot Zone and decontaminate people and equipment leaving the Hot Zone.

PPE

Fires

- ☐ Wear structural firefighting PPE and BA.

Other incidents

- ☐ Choose PPE depending on risk assessment.
 - Minimum level is disposable coveralls, disposable gloves, and P2 mask.
 - Increase respiratory and eye protection (eg BA) if significant release of airborne fibres is likely.
 - Consider gumboots to avoid contaminating firefighting boots.

Handover

- ☐ Ensure information on asbestos hazard is communicated to the owner of the site or waste.
- ☐ Complete a site handover form.

Reporting

- ☐ Record in eAIRS details of asbestos hazard and control measures.

Dust suppression tactics

- ☐ Leave ACM in situ if possible for remediation by owner of site or waste.
- ☐ Minimise disturbance – ie restrict salvage and overhaul work.
- ☐ Lightly dampen down ACM with fog spray.
- ☐ Apply a bonding agent such as foam blanket or coloured glue mix to the ACM.
- ☐ Bag into marked asbestos containment bags.
- ☐ Wrap or cover with salvage plastic sheeting.

Decontamination

Use *wet decontamination* for equipment and people leaving the Hot Zone:

- ☐ *People* – use fine spray to confine dust to surface of outer PPC and bag before leaving Hot Zone. Transport in host basket or other safe stowage area.
- ☐ *Equipment* – thoroughly wash surfaces with copious amounts of water, with the exception of:
 - Hose and disposable PPE – bag and leave in the Hot Zone for owner of the site or waste to dispose of.
 - Equipment unsuitable for wet decontamination (or if visible dust cannot be removed) – bag and seek specialist advice.