



Asbestos Awareness

WHAT HAPPENED?

There have been recent cases where our sites have been, or potentially been, contaminated with asbestos. This safety alert is to remind people of the risks from asbestos and the ways we have to keep everyone safe.

Exposure to airborne asbestos fibres is a serious health hazard and, while asbestos is safe if undisturbed, its presence still creates a risk. Asbestos was widely used in the past as an insulating and construction material before its health impacts were understood and it can still be found on our worksites in buildings, equipment, and in the soil on sites and under lines. Around 220 people a year die in New Zealand because of inhaled asbestos fibres.

We have developed ways to help keep people safe from asbestos at work including awareness training, a register and labels for asbestos found during surveys, an asbestos management plan, and a Panel to provide independent expert advice on asbestos. Details can be found in the [Asbestos](#) page on the Volt and the ECHO [Asbestos pages](#).

Despite this there are still unexpected discoveries of asbestos at a site, and sometimes our processes are not followed, which has led to avoidable safety risks. Staying aware of the hazard that asbestos presents and knowing what to do is the best way to keep everyone safe. Transpower's requirements for managing asbestos are stricter than those set by WorkSafe, so what is done on other worksites may not meet our standard for keeping people safe.

ROOT CAUSE

Asbestos is present on our sites. It is dangerous when disturbed and fibres are released, even if it is not worked on directly. It can decay over time or be damaged and can be moved around by water or because of nearby work, creating more risk. Not following asbestos management processes can lead to an increased risk of exposure.

LEARNINGS

- Being aware of the asbestos risk and avoiding any exposure to airborne fibres is the best way to keep everyone safe. Be sure to check the asbestos register and follow the asbestos management plan. The Panel can provide pre-works assessment of the asbestos risk for your work, will carry out any sampling necessary, and will help deal with any suspected asbestos found. Contact asbestos@transpower.co.nz if you need advice.
- Removing asbestos safely is our preferred way to reduce the risk of exposure to airborne fibres. But staff, service providers and other contractors must not remove any amount of known or assumed asbestos. This must be done by licensed removalists, who also have the right qualifications for the type of asbestos involved. The activity must also be approved and managed by the Panel who ensures that any removal is done safely, the area is safe to use afterwards, and our records are updated.
- Items known or suspected to contain asbestos can only be worked on if all the requirements of our asbestos management plan and the WorkSafe Approved Code of Practice are met.

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