Asbestos toolbox talk

Health · about 5 minutes · read it out, or say it in your own words

SITE OR JOB	DATE	PRESENTER

Many older South African buildings still have asbestos cement roof sheets, gutters, downpipes, ceilings, fascias and water tanks. Asbestos left alone and in good condition is low risk, but cutting, drilling, breaking or sweeping it releases fibres that can cause incurable lung diseases and cancers decades later. Renovation and alteration work is exactly where small builders run into it.

SAY THIS

Why asbestos is so dangerous

Asbestos fibres are far too small to see, smell or feel. When asbestos material is broken, cut or drilled, the fibres get into the air and you breathe them in. They stay in your lungs for life. Many years later, often decades later, they can cause lung cancer and other lung diseases that cannot be cured. By the time anyone feels sick, it is far too late.

Where you might find it

Think of anything in an older building that looks like grey cement board or pipe: corrugated or flat roof sheets, gutters and downpipes, fascia boards, ceiling and wall boards, eaves, old water tanks, vent pipes and drain pipes. It can also hide in old floor tiles, their glue, and lagging round old geysers and pipes. You cannot tell by looking. If the building is old and the material looks like this, treat it as asbestos until someone competent says it is not.

Stop, do not disturb, report

If you come across material that might be asbestos, stop work at once. Do not break it, cut it, drill it, sand it or sweep it, and do not try to carry it away. Keep other people away from the area. Tell the supervisor straight away. If you have already damaged it, stop, step away, keep others out and report it. Do not dust yourself off with a brush or an air line.

Things that are against the law

Nobody may cut, grind or drill asbestos with an angle grinder or any fast power tool. Nobody may blow asbestos dust away with compressed air. Asbestos sheets may not be reused, resold, given away or recycled, so never take old roof sheets home for a chicken run or a shack. And you may not fix things onto asbestos, like new brackets or a satellite dish on an asbestos roof.

Removal is a specialist job

We do not remove or repair asbestos ourselves. The law sorts asbestos work by size. Only small jobs, such as taking out less than 10 square metres of asbestos cement sheeting, may be done without a registered asbestos contractor, and even those need a risk assessment, a written safe work procedure and trained people. Bigger removal and repair work must be done by a registered asbestos contractor under an approved plan of work, checked by an approved inspection authority. Our part is simple: stop, do not disturb it, report it.

CHECK ON SITE TODAY

- [ ] Is this an older building, and has the client or principal contractor given us an asbestos inventory or survey?
- [ ] Look around: are there grey cement-type roof sheets, gutters, pipes, boards or tanks where we are working today?
- [ ] Does anyone plan to drill, cut or fix anything onto material that could be asbestos?
- [ ] Is there any broken or damaged suspect material lying around that we must keep people away from?
- [ ] Does everyone know who to tell if they find suspect material?

ASK THE CREW

- ? Where have you seen asbestos sheets or pipes on other jobs, and what was done with them?
- ? What would you do if the client asked you to just cut out an old asbestos gutter?
- ? Why do you think people still take old asbestos sheets home?
- ? If you drilled through a board and only then realised it might be asbestos, what are the first three things you would do?

THE LAW

Asbestos Abatement Regulations, 2020, regulation 8: Duties of persons who may be exposed; Asbestos Abatement Regulations, 2020, regulation 3: Identification of asbestos in place; Asbestos Abatement Regulations, 2020, regulation 24: Prohibition; Asbestos Abatement Regulations, 2020, regulation 11: Duties of asbestos client for asbestos work; Asbestos Abatement Regulations, 2020, regulation 1: Definitions ("type 1", "type 2" and "type 3 asbestos work"). What each one says, in plain words, with links: sitediary.co.za/toolbox-talks/asbestos/

Toolbox talk attendance register

TOPIC

Asbestos awareness

DATE

SITE OR JOB

TIME

PRESENTER

COMPANY

PRESENTER SIGNATURE

By signing, I confirm that I attended this toolbox talk, that it was given in a language I understand, and that I could ask questions.

NO.	NAME AND SURNAME	COMPANY OR TRADE	SIGNATURE
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