

Case Study - Construction

Asbestos

Bob owns a handyman business, where he has over 25 years' experience in the trades industry and is well respected and has a steady customer base.

think safe. | work safe. | be safe.



On a daily basis, Bob is required to attend residential homes to do his job.

As a sole trader, Bob is also considered a person conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU), he has a duty under work health and safety (WHS) laws to minimise the risks to his workers' health in the workplace.

A major risk Bob faces in his line of work are invisible dusts, gases, fumes, vapours, mists and microorganisms into the air during the work process. Although it is a legal requirement for commercial workplaces to keep registers of hazardous chemicals, most residential homes are not required to have a chemical register and occupants may not be aware that there are airborne hazards.

Identify and assess chemical hazards and risks

Bob is aware that there is a risk of exposure to asbestos dust when called to older houses. As asbestos-containing building products were used in residential construction before 1990.

Due to the risk of asbestos in older houses, Bob is conscious with certain jobs he needs to use personal protective equipment as a control measure to minimise the risks of exposure to any of the potential risks.

Asbestos containing building products do not pose a health and safety risk if left undisturbed. It is when certain work processes which may result in creating asbestos dust that becomes a breathable hazard. Usually you can't tell if a material contains asbestos by looking at it or know where it may be in a house. Bob always asks and communicates with home occupants about any known asbestos hazards or the age of the house to determine if extra precautions such as using personal protective equipment is necessary or if he should suspect the presence of asbestos.

Bob is aware when working around asbestos, he must not use high-pressure water sprays or compressed air, brooms or anything else that might release asbestos into the air including cutting or drilling into asbestos.

Bob is aware that if there is more than 10m² metres of asbestos (or if in the ACT any amount of asbestos) he must get a contractor with an asbestos removal licence to remove then asbestos.

If Bob suspects there is asbestos in the air, particularly inside, he needs to control the use of power tools and isolate the area to minimise the spread of asbestos dust.

If Bob identifies suspected asbestos containing materials or is not sure at the work site, he will leave it for identification and removal by someone with an asbestos removal licence.

Anyone who removes asbestos is required to be appropriately trained and to hold the relevant licence. In some states, notice has to also be provided to you WHS Regulator when removing existing asbestos.

Control, monitor and ongoing review

Bob has undertaken training in asbestos awareness and keeps up to date regularly to familiarise himself with the process of developing asbestos registers and asbestos management plans and refresh himself on the procedures for incidents and emergencies involving asbestos, including who is responsible for what. Most importantly, Bob need to make sure he understands the regulations around identifying and managing risks around asbestos in the workplace.

As asbestos dust is invisible, Bob also need to make sure he is monitoring his own health regularly through health checks as an ongoing control measure.

To find training providers for courses in Asbestos Awareness visit [training.gov.au](https://www.training.gov.au).