

Overview

Before the 1990s, asbestos was commonly used in building and insulating material throughout electricity networks.

Over the past decade, Ausgrid has established practices to make sure that both our employees and the public are protected from asbestos related risks. This includes a plan to remove and clean sites where asbestos poses a risk to the safety of our people or the public.

Understanding asbestos

Products that contain asbestos are considered either friable or non-friable. Friable asbestos containing materials can be reduced to powder using hand pressure, whereas non-friable (bonded) asbestos containing materials are more strongly held together.

Your electrical meter board

Many older properties constructed prior to 1988 contain asbestos containing materials (ACMs). Fibro, a common asbestos containing material, was extensively used in residential construction in locations such as eaves, ceilings, wall linings and in wet areas such as kitchens and bathrooms.

Similarly properties constructed prior to 1988 may contain asbestos in their electrical meter board. It is not possible to visually assess a meter board and determine if it contains asbestos. To confirm the presence of asbestos a qualified hygienist is required to carry out sampling which is then laboratory tested.

Studies have shown that asbestos containing materials, if in sound condition and left undisturbed, are not a significant health risk. If the asbestos fibres remain firmly bound in a solid cement sheet or structure, generally you do not need to remove the asbestos containing material. The presence of asbestos containing materials in your home or workplace does not automatically mean that your health is at risk.

If you're planning electrical work, or you are concerned that there is a risk of asbestos dust in your meter board, you may wish to ask an occupational hygienist to undertake testing and provide advice in relation to any potential risks.

At any time Ausgrid may need to access your meter board for meter reading and maintenance. Ausgrid staff would undertake a risk assessment for asbestos in your meter board and as a precaution may wear appropriate safety equipment and use safe practices appropriate for work involving asbestos.

Managing asbestos across Ausgrid's network

The ultimate long term goal of our Asbestos Safety Management Plan is for all our workplaces to be free of Asbestos Containing Materials (ACMs). The aim is to wherever practical remove ACM during renovation, refurbishment, and maintenance of the electrical network.

The following measures are in place to manage the risk of asbestos:

- Asbestos management plan and safety procedures
- Asbestos register
- Asbestos training programs
- Planned asbestos removal works programs
- Operational resources for asbestos removal
- Licensed contractors for asbestos cleanup and waste removal
- Personal protective equipment for employees
- Hazard assessment checklist
- Asbestos health monitoring



Asbestos Register

Ausgrid maintains a register on the state of asbestos on and around our assets as required by the Code of Practice for the Management and Control of Asbestos in the Workplace.

Asbestos Remediation Programs

We have been delivering a planned program of asbestos removal across our network assets for the past decade, based upon a prioritised risk assessed approach.

All zone and subtransmission substations have been subject to an asbestos audit and all friable asbestos identified as part of the audit has been removed.

All of our Sydney CBD underground substations are included in our regular program of asbestos auditing.

Asbestos-containing roof material is in the process of being progressively removed. A program is also underway to replace floor tiles that contain asbestos in control rooms.

An audit of 4,000 underground electricity pits has been completed and 57 of those pits were found to contain friable asbestos. Asbestos has been removed from all but one of those pits. Each pit has also been cleaned.

Employee Training and Personal Protective Equipment

Our training courses comply with the Work Health and Safety Regulation 2017.

We supply our employees with personal protective equipment (PPE), safety equipment and materials utilised for work involving asbestos through procurement processes which ensure that all products purchased are compliant with current standards and have been risk assessed.

Asbestos Waste Management

The safe processes of asbestos waste disposal are defined in both our safety management processes as well as our environmental guidelines.

A variety of asbestos waste bags, plastic and duct tape materials are available for our employees to use in accordance with the work processes outlined in the network standard for the disposal of quantities of asbestos waste less than 10m². Any larger quantities or quantities of friable asbestos are removed and disposed of by licensed asbestos contractors.

Our Network Standard 'NUS211 Working with Asbestos Products' is available on our website at www.ausgrid.com.au.

