

Asbestos related hazards have been documented from a liability and health and safety perspective, but the presence of asbestos can also have a substantial impact on property damage and interrupt business operations.

Property damage only amounts to a small percentage of claims, whereas business interruption can involve site investigation, clean-up and extended inaccessibility; resulting in major disruption to a business and increased loss of profit.

Additionally, to avoid an unnecessary exposure to your business, a thorough review should be made to check for asbestos containing material before leasing or buying a facility.



When asbestos containing material is present:

Asbestos at your facility should be identified and the type and location should be included in an Asbestos register, which is required in Australia. The asbestos register must be reviewed at least every 5 years or when asbestos is removed, disturbed, sealed or enclosed.

The presence of asbestos containing material should also be included in maintenance and inspection plans.

Asbestos containing material should be prevented from being damaged or disturbed in everyday use or by business activities.

Asbestos cement roof sheeting is susceptible to hail damage, which can result in asbestos fibres being released into the facility.

Asbestos containing material should be removed where possible, particularly over critical manufacturing or storage areas with a high potential for disruption or damage if contaminated by asbestos fibre.

Replacement of asbestos containing material could be considered in stages or by wholesale replacement to permanently eradicate the problem.

Removal and disposal costs may be further increased by Work Health and Safety and Environmental legislation.

Coating and sealing of asbestos containing material may be possible. This is done primarily for liability, health and safety reasons, but has limited benefit from a property damage and business interruption perspective.

The presence of asbestos containing material should always be considered in your disaster recovery and business continuity plans.

Reference:

Asbestos, viewed: 20/04/2020 <www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/asbestos>

For more information:
www.vero.com.au/vero/business-insurance/risk-management
Contact us at riskengineering@vero.com.au

Asbestos facts:

Asbestos is classified as a known human carcinogen. It can enter the air or water from the breakdown of natural deposits and manufactured products. Small diameter asbestos fibres can remain suspended in the air for an extensive time and be carried long distances by wind or water before settling down. The fibres do not evaporate in air or dissolve in water. The asbestos fibres can either be white, grey, blue or brown in appearance.

In the late 1970s, Australia regulated asbestos. The use of crocidolite (blue) asbestos was banned in 1967 and Amosite (brown) asbestos continued use until the mid 1980s. Chrysotile (white) asbestos finally was banned 20 years later, at the end of 2003. There are laws which have been introduced making it illegal in Australia to use, reuse or sell any products containing asbestos, including car brake pads and gaskets.

Asbestos is not only in old products. It continues to be unwittingly imported in contravention of Australian regulations, from countries where asbestos is not illegal and products can be certified as asbestos-free if they contain less than 5% asbestos. These materials have been identified in a number of workplaces across Australia.