McMAHON SERVICES

# Asbestos Contaminated Soils

## Background

Due to its widespread use as a building product, asbestos contaminated soil has become one of the most common types of site contamination in Australia. Once these buildings are demolished, fragments have entered the soil system where they have remained over time. Due to the relatively good understanding in the community of the impacts that asbestos can have in causing lung cancer and mesothelioma, asbestos contaminated soil management has come to the fore to be regarded in the same manner as other asbestos management practices.

Asbestos contaminated soil was historically managed in a range of different ways, depending on the State or Territory where works occurred, and depending on which Council or State based body was enforcing varying aspects of the environmental and OH&S Regulations. This has recently changed with the harmonisation of OH&S Regulations and the publication of key guidelines for the industry.

## Regulation

The management of asbestos contaminated soil has typically been driven by two main regulatory areas. These are:

- Environmental Regulations – responsibility of the respective EPAs.
- OH&S Regulations – responsibility of the respective WorkSafe departments.

Both of these State and Territory based government agencies play a key role in how asbestos contaminated soil is managed, and both need to be recognised and understood when undertaking works involving asbestos contaminated soil.

In addition to the Regulations, there are three key documents that practitioners refer to when dealing with asbestos contaminated soil. These are:

- WA Department of Health. Guidelines for the Assessment, Remediation and Management of Asbestos-Contaminated Sites in Western Australia (May 2009).
- National Environment Protection Council. National Environment Protection (Assessment of Site Contamination) Measure (2013).
- Safe Work Australia. How to safely remove asbestos Code of Practice, (2011).

The Safe Work Australia Code of Practice has been adopted by the harmonised States and Territories, with exception of Victoria leading to slightly different practices when works are occurring on sites with asbestos contaminated soil.

*Bonded asbestos pipe uncovered in soil*

*An example of asbestos building materials found on site*

McMahon Services are industry leaders in the management and handling of asbestos, completing some of the largest asbestos removal projects ever undertaken in Australia.

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## The McMahon Services Solution

The management of asbestos contaminated soil is a specialised area that requires a thorough understanding of both OH&S and Environmental Regulations. It also requires trained personnel and specially modified plant and equipment to be used in order to meet the requirements of the regulatory bodies, the community and the client.

McMahon Services is an industry leader in the management and handling of asbestos. Holding A-Class licences in all States and Territories, we have completed some of the largest asbestos removal projects ever undertaken in Australia. We have been pioneers in the asbestos removal industry since the industries' inception in the late 1970's and have completed over $500 million in asbestos removal, hazardous materials removal and environmental decontamination projects in that time.

Our strong profile and reputation in the industry means we have worked with authorities, regulatory bodies, and government to develop approved codes of practice and safe-work procedures surrounding the safe removal of asbestos, still in use today.

Through on-going innovation we have developed the knowledge, skills and work processes in order to effectively and safely manage asbestos contaminated soil. This includes the following:

- **Comprehensive understanding of all State and Territory Regulations**
  - McMahon Services understand the respective OH&S Regulations enforced by each State and Territory in respect to harmonisation and the independence of Victoria;
  - High level knowledge of Environmental Regulations enforced by each State and Territory, as well as the Contaminated Land Audit system.

- **State of the art asbestos specific plant and equipment**
  - HEPA vacuum systems;
  - Modified excavators with positive air system;
  - Negative air picking lines and screening equipment;
  - Custom designed and fabricated portable asbestos enclosure, airlock and HEPA extraction system;
  - Dust suppression and stockpile management systems as well as use of novel dust suppression reagents.

- **A-Class license holder in all States and Territories**
  - Handle both friable and non-friable asbestos;
  - Constant training of personnel in safe work practices;
  - McMahon Services personnel certified asbestos removal accreditation;
  - EPA Waste Transport Licences in all States and Territories;
  - Processes and management plans in place to undertake all works.

- **Turn-key solutions for sites containing asbestos contaminated soil**
  - This utilises all aspects of the specialised plant and equipment, knowledge, skills and processes required to deliver the required outcome.