



Health and Safety Bulletin No. 13

Fire doors containing friable asbestos material

Date: 1 December 2023

Background

WorkSafe is aware of several recent incidents that resulted in people being exposed to asbestos where workers have conducted repairs on fire doors containing friable asbestos.

Historically, fire doors were commonly manufactured using asbestos due to its fire resistant property. They are classified as containing friable asbestos and consist of a central core made of either asbestos or compressed asbestos material.

Fire doors are commonly found in areas leading into stairwells and other escape routes of a building and are often between sections of a building identified on evacuation plans. They can be identified by their heavier weight and usually have a compliance tag.

Door coverings may be made from natural material, such as wood, or composite materials, such as veneer, or clad in cement sheeting, and have mastic insulation that looks like a plastic coating or tape. From the top of the door, the asbestos cores often appear white.

Asbestos can be released into the air if the materials are disturbed during maintenance, such as fixing locks, door handles and hinges. New fire doors are labelled asbestos-free. If there is no 'asbestos-free' label a fire door should be assumed to contain asbestos.

Contributory factors

Contributory factors varied between incidents, but included:

- fire doors not being identified, due to:
 - missing compliance tags or tags being painted over
 - not being listed on the asbestos register
 - not being listed as a limitation on the scope of work
 - not being labelled as containing asbestos
- workers not being aware that fire doors may contain friable asbestos
- workers removing the door without being trained or licensed to do the removal work
- fire doors being damaged, including:
 - door handles, locks, hinges or door closer missing or needing to be replaced
 - cracks, chunks or outer frame missing from the door (e.g. the top or bottom edges having been cut down)
 - delamination of the surface of the door (i.e. peeling away from the door)
 - core material being exposed.

Actions required

Fire doors must be included on the asbestos register, and labelled, if known or assumed to contain asbestos. Before any work on a fire door is conducted, the asbestos register must be consulted to see if the fire door is listed in the body of the register or as a limitation at the front of the scope of work.

When performing any repair works on fire doors, a person conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU) and other duty holders must ensure that:

- they determine if the door is a fire door that contains asbestos:
- workers are given information, training and instruction on the hazards, risks and control measures prior to conducting maintenance repair work
- the condition of the door is determined, including:
 - if any hinges, handles, locking mechanisms, or self closers are missing or damaged
 - if the door is damaged with either the top or bottom edges missing, holes, cracks or delamination of the outer edge
- if the door is damaged, that the door is appropriately made safe by trained workers
- workers have the correct licence for asbestos door removal work
- removal of a fire door containing asbestos is conducted in accordance with work health and safety legislation and associated codes of practice.

References and further information

Department of Energy, Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety

WorkSafe

- [Asbestos - Frequently asked questions](#)

Work Health and Safety Commission

- [How to manage and control asbestos in the workplace: Code of practice](#)
- [How to safely remove asbestos: Code of practice](#)

Australian Standards

- AS 1905.1 *Components for the protection of openings in fire-resistant walls, Part 1: Fire-resistant doorsets*

Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency

- [Asbestos awareness information in the fire safety installation industry](#)
- [Asbestos awareness for fire protection trades](#)

Asbestos Awareness

- [Asbestos Products Database: Fire Doors](#)

NSW Asbestos Coordination Committee

- [Fire doors and asbestos](#)

Queensland Fire and Emergency Services

- [Fire doors \(Fire resistant doorsets\): Information sheet](#)