



## Estate Planning & Upkeep - ADVICE

02/20

### Asbestos Containing Dust in Ceilings

#### Who should read this?

- ▶ This Advice is for information of anyone undertaking work (including demolition or inspection activities) on Defence buildings or infrastructure.

#### What Does this Advice Contain?

- ▶ Information on asbestos containing dust and the potential for this hazard to be present in ceiling spaces and wall cavities within some buildings across the Defence estate.

#### Background

- ▶ Workplace investigations occurring over the past six months have raised awareness of risk associated with asbestos containing dust (ACD). ACD is a byproduct of building material such as cladding, insulation and lagging which was used in construction of buildings and infrastructure across Defence between the 1940s to late 1980s. Over time and due to interference through certain activities asbestos fibres contained in these materials can break down and become smaller, loose particles. The particles eventually settle on surfaces around the source and will often be mixed with other loose particles from ambient sources and forming ACD.
- ▶ The risk of exposure to ACD has been known to Defence for some time and is managed by several controls outlined in the [Defence Asbestos Management Plan \(AMP\)](#). Controls include labeling of effected areas, controlling access and monitoring condition of the source (should that source remain in situ). Risk is further controlled by following appropriate WHS risk management practices as published in the [Work Health and Safety \(How to Manage and Control Asbestos in the Workplace\) Code of Practice 2015](#) and Asbestos Procedures published in the Defence Safety Manual.

#### Outcome

- ▶ Accessing ceiling spaces will continue to be a necessary component of Estate Upkeep activities. If a building is identified as containing asbestos or if the building is more than 20 years old it should be presumed that voids within the structure present a hazard of ACD. The potential for exposure to ACD during entries/penetrations of these spaces is heavily dependent on the type of asbestos fibres present, exposure time, ambient conditions (disturbance) and WHS controls.
- ▶ DEPU are confident that sufficient policy and guidance exists around controls which should be considered and practiced when entering ceiling spaces. The purpose of this Advice is to reinforce the need for ACD to be adequately considered ahead of potential exposure events and to reduce risk so far as reasonably practicable by applying sound risk management strategies in each circumstance.
- ▶ This Advice is published for information of all Groups and Services as well as contracted service providers.

Contact the **Directorate of Estate Planning & Upkeep** via their Group Mailbox:  
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You can find out additional information from the [Defence Estate Quality Management System \(DEQMS\)](#) web page.