10.03 Asbestos Incidents Operational Procedure

Section 1 - Purpose and Objectives

(1) To provide guidance on how to:

a. Ensure the safety of CFA and other agency members, and residents;
b. Ensure that appropriate risk control measures are taken by CFA members attending incidents where asbestos is present (or is suspected of being present) whilst maintaining safety and providing accurate reporting of incidents involving asbestos.
c. Minimise environmental impacts.

Section 2 - Scope

(2) This procedure (SOP) applies to all CFA members.

Section 3 - Procedure

Safety of CFA Members & who to notify

(3) The health and safety of CFA members is the primary consideration of the Incident Controller.

(4) Where asbestos is present or is suspected of being present at a fire or incident, the Incident Controller shall (refer Asbestos – Incident Controller Initial Action Check List):

a. Consider the appointment of a Safety Officer; and
b. Notify all CFA and non-CFA members at the fire or incident of the presence or suspected presence of asbestos and the appropriate precautions to be taken.
c. Restrict entry to the area and establish HOT & COLD zones. All non-essential CFA and other agency members, including residents, should remain outside the Hot Zone.
d. Assess the requirement for and numbers of operational members required to enter the Hot Zone to limit potential exposure.
e. Any material reasonably suspected of containing asbestos shall be treated as asbestos containing material until proven otherwise.

(5) Consider the use of hazard tape to identify the impacted area and notify:

a. Property owner/occupier
b. Fire Investigators
c. Other emergency services/personnel on scene and District Duty Officer (DDO)/State Duty Officer (SDO) via Firecom.

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(6) The DDO/SDO shall consider notifying:

a. Municipal Building Surveyor or Environmental Health Officer
b. Environment Protection Authority (EPA)
c. DMO or State Fleet Duty Officer (where appliances may be affected).

Personal Protective Clothing & Equipment

(7) The minimum protection against asbestos fibres for CFA members attending incidents:

a. Full Wildfire or Structural PPC; and
b. Firefighting Gloves
c. P2 or P3 respirator (certified to AS/NZS 1716).
d. Note: It is not necessary to use gas or splash suits for asbestos incidents.

(8) The minimum protection for Fire Investigators against asbestos fibres during any investigation of the site is:

a. Fire Investigation PPC;
b. P2 or P3 respirator (certified to AS/NZS 1716);
c. Disposable particle barrier coveralls (at a minimum certified to EN ISO 13982-1 Type 5); and
d. Nitrile gloves.

(9) Decontamination - CFA members assisting with decontamination must wear:

a. Full Wildfire or Structural PPC ensemble, or disposable particle barrier coveralls (at a minimum certified to EN ISO 13982-1 Type 5) where available;
b. Nitrile gloves (not firefighting gloves); and
c. P2 Respirator (certified to AS/NZS 1716).

Incident Operations

(10) All personnel (CFA or otherwise) entering areas of the fire-ground where it is suspected asbestos containing material is present, MUST wear Personal Protective Clothing (PPC) in accordance with personal protection (listed above) and must follow the steps outlined in the Asbestos Initial Action Checklist.

(11) The area suspected of contamination needs to be identified and secured. All non-essential CFA and non-CFA members should remain outside the contaminated area.

(12) Where practicable, all CFA members and vehicles are to remain up wind, air conditioners and ventilation should be shut off, whilst all vehicles' doors, lockers and windows are to be closed.

(13) Where the fire or incident is located at domestic premises, where possible enquiries shall be made with the owner/occupier regarding the presence, location, and type of any asbestos.

(14) In commercial properties, access to the Asbestos Register should be requested from the property owner or occupier.

(15) Where possible, asbestos containing material should be kept damp. High pressure jet streams should be avoided where practicable to minimise break up of asbestos containing material.

(16) For incidents involving industrial/commercial buildings with known large quantities of asbestos containing

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material, contact DDO/SDO via Firecom to seek advice from EPA. Water run-off is to be contained as far as practicable to prevent the spread of contamination.

Personal Decontamination

(17) All CFA and other agency members, suspected of being exposed to asbestos shall be decontaminated at the incident site, and are required to follow the decontamination process as outlined below.

(18) Firefighters and CFA members assisting with decontamination and other agency members being decontaminated must wear P2 Respirator (certified to AS/NZS 1716) during this process as a minimum.

(19) Low pressure water spray should be used to wet down PPC, and wet wiping also used, prior to removal.

(20) Remove all PPC and place in 2 x 200-micron bags.

(21) Remove P2 Respirator and nitrile gloves only after all PPC has been removed and bagged.

(22) Individuals should then be decontaminated as appropriate using decontamination shower, hose lines or other water supplies. Particular attention should be paid to hair, neck, and face.

Personal Protective Clothing (PPC) Decontamination

(23) Contaminated clothing must be processed in accordance with this part. This includes any clothing items potentially exposed during firefighting operations.

(24) Low pressure water spray should be used to wet down Personal Protective Clothing (PPC), and wet wiping also used, prior to removal.

(25) Helmets, boots and goggles should be washed on scene with a low-pressure water spray and wet wiped, and recommissioned once the neck flap has been replaced.

(26) Personal Protective Clothing (PPC) that is suspected of being contaminated with asbestos containing material is to be double bagged in 2 x 200-micron thickness plastic bags and sealed using zip ties or other suitable means such as tape. Included within the bags could be:

a. Firefighting gloves
b. Flash hood or neck flap
c. Firefighting coat
d. Firefighting over trousers
e. Braces

(27) Decontaminate the sealed PPC bag by washing the outside of bag with low-pressure water spray.

(28) Each individual’s gear should be bagged separately, bags should be labelled with the appropriate CFA warning contamination swing tag supplied in the Asbestos Kits, clearly identifying:

a. Brigade/Region;
b. Owner/wearer name;
c. Date; and
d. Other relevant notes (e.g., Incident location).

(29) All bags should be tagged with the yellow tag as supplied in the asbestos kits stating, ‘Suspected Asbestos Contamination. The bag should then be twisted at the neck, with the neck folded over and secured in the folded

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position with strong adhesive tape or cable ties.

(30) All bagged clothing must be transported to CFA's approved Laundry Contractor (as set out in Contaminated CFA Personal Protective Clothing – Request for Cleaning) with red pizza bag as soon as practicable, as arranged by the DDO/SDO.

Protective Equipment (PE) Decontamination

(31) Other potentially contaminated equipment must be managed as per the attached Asbestos Initial Action Checklist. Equipment also includes vehicles and other items potentially exposed during firefighting operations.

(32) All Breathing Apparatus harnesses suspected of contamination should be thoroughly rinsed down with copious amounts of water at the incident site whilst maintaining a pressurised air system. If debris remain, contact DDO/SDO for advice via Firecom.

(33) Upon return to station, harnesses should be air dried, and masks cleaned according to normal after-use maintenance procedures. Breathing Apparatus cylinders, non - disposable splash suits etc. should be thoroughly washed down on scene.

(34) Vehicle exteriors and equipment (ladders, hoses, etc) suspected of being contaminated with asbestos containing material are to be washed down with a low-pressure water spray at the incident site after use.

(35) Equipment such as radios, torches etc, and hard surfaces of vehicle interiors suspected of being contaminated with asbestos containing material shall be wiped with specialist wipes if provided. If wipes are unavailable wipe with a damp cloth. If vehicle interior fabrics are suspected of contamination contact the DDO/SDO via Firecom for advice.

Recording Potential Exposure of Personnel

(36) Following an incident where asbestos is suspected to have been present, the Incident Controller MUST ensure that Personal Injury/Incident Report/s are submitted and recorded on CFASafe incorporating the following information:

a. Names and related details of all members involved in the incident;
b. Detailed information relating to duties undertaken by crew members at the fire/incident relating to their exposure;
c. Type of structure involved;
d. Areas where asbestos was suspected as being present;
e. The type and condition of the suspected material (e.g. cement sheeting); and
f. The risk controls implemented at the incident to mitigate the risks from asbestos exposure.

Asbestos Waste

(37) At the completion of the incident disposable material such as: used wipes; wet ones; coveralls, P2 respirator mask, nitrile gloves, etc. should be placed in an asbestos appropriate plastic bag and sealed with strong adhesive tape or cable ties. The bag should be labeled with an information tag and 'Warning Suspected Asbestos Waste' sticker. The DDO/SDO can provide advice on correct disposal of these contaminated items at a premise licensed to accept asbestos waste and may contact local council for assistance as required.

Fire Investigation

(38) In any area where asbestos is suspected, Fire Investigators shall wear PPC as outlined in point - clause 11.

(39) Where possible, Fire Investigators shall ensure that any suspected asbestos-containing material is kept damp.

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(40) All disposable overalls, P2 particulate masks and gloves used in the investigation should be bagged and tagged in accordance with PPC and PPE decontamination requirements. Contact the DDO/SDO for advice on correct disposal of asbestos waste.

(41) Decontamination of all other PPC & E shall follow Procedures above.

Asbestos Sampling and Analysis

(42) CFA members must not, collect samples of suspected asbestos containing material from original structure asset, PPC or PE.

(43) Where suspected ACM is present the Incident Controller must not collect samples for analysis; in such circumstances the Incident Controller must instead assume that asbestos is present. This is consistent with provisions of the Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2017 (Vic). Where the Incident Controller assumes the presence of asbestos they must implement all parts of this SOP i.e. appropriate decontamination procedures, laundering procedures as well as recording the exposure event in CFASafe and FIRS.

Safety Notes

(44) Appropriate PPE&C shall be worn at all times by CFA members.

(45) All CFA members are to carry out personal hygiene measures (e.g., washing hands and face prior to eating/drinking or leaving the incident site).

(46) In the case of incidents where large quantities of asbestos containing material are involved water run-off is to be contained as far as practicable to prevent the spread of contamination.

Enviromental Notes

(47) Nil.

Section 4 - Definitions

(48) Commonly defined terms are located in the CFA Centralised Glossary.

(49) Exposure: Personnel shall be deemed to have been ‘exposed’ to asbestos when they have undertaken asbestos related activities or were known or reasonably suspected of being exposed to airborne asbestos fibres.

Section 5 - Related Documents

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Status and Details

Status	Not Yet Approved
Effective Date	To Be Advised
Review Date	To Be Advised
Approval Authority	
Approval Date	To Be Advised
Expiry Date	Not Applicable
Accountable Officer	Garry Cook Deputy Chief Officer Operational Response & Coordination
Responsible Officer	David Harris Assistant Chief Fire Officer - Occupational, Health & Safety
Author	Beth Robinson
Enquiries Contact	Operational Response and Coordination

Glossary Terms and Definitions

"CFA member" - Refers to all CFA volunteers, volunteer auxiliary workers, officers, employees and secondees.

"Firecom" - The callsign for day to day / normal radio communications to CFA vehicles and aircraft.

"Asbestos containing material" - Asbestos containing material means any material or object that contains asbestos (other than plant in which asbestos is fixed or installed, The Occupational Health and Safety Regulations (2017) – Part 1.1(5) Definitions). ACM that when dry can, either in its current state or as a result of a work process, be pulverised or reduced to powder by hand pressure is called a Friable ACM. Examples of friable ACM include: pipe lagging fire retardant material on steel work sprayed insulation vinyl sheet with fibrous asbestos backing. Friable asbestos is more likely to release airborne asbestos fibres when disturbed. Non-friable ACM refers to any ACM where the asbestos fibres are usually bonded or mixed with a stable cement or other hard bonding component and so cannot be crumbled, pulverised or reduced to powder by hand pressure. Examples of non-friable ACM include: asbestos cement sheet asbestos cement moulded products bitumen-based water proofing vinyl floor tiles Non-friable asbestos in good condition is unlikely to produce airborne fibres unless it is disturbed. Non-friable ACMs can deteriorate, resulting in their re-classification as 'friable'. An example is Cement sheeting can become friable because of: impact or crushing natural weathering events an extreme event such as heat from a fire.

"Personal Protective Clothing (PPC)" - Includes clothing used to provide protection to CFA members from the risks associated with performing a specific operational task for which they are competent and endorsed

"Breathing Apparatus" - Within CFA, the acronyms CABA and BA are used interchangeably when referring to compressed air breathing apparatus sets and procedures. The term BA (for breathing apparatus) is more commonly used. BA is also referred to as self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA). BA is used to provide breathable air for respiratory protection in an immediately dangerous to life and health (IDLH) atmosphere; environments that contain a combination of high temperatures, oxygen deficiency, toxic substances, smoke concentration, dust, heat radiation and/or burning embers.

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