



HAZARDOUS MATERIALS POLICY

Version 2 | December 2017

PURPOSE OF THE POLICY

- To ensure that schools provide a safe environment to students, staff and visitors by effectively addressing risks associated with hazardous materials.
- To help principals meet their responsibilities for ensuring safe work practices in accordance with *the Occupational Health and Safety Act (2004)*.

RELEVANT LEGISLATION AND REGULATION

- [Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004](#)
- [Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2007 – Chapter 4](#)

POLICY STATEMENT

Schools must provide a safe environment for students and staff by effectively managing hazardous materials on school sites.

Hazardous materials are noxious, toxic or explosive substances that cause health risks to people who are exposed to them.

Examples of hazardous materials found in schools include asbestos, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), synthetic mineral fibres (SMFs), treated pine and lead-based paint. These may be:

- found in the fabric of school infrastructure;
- used during routine maintenance activities, including those of on-site contractors; or
- used in the curriculum.

Principals need to be aware of the presence of these materials and follow appropriate procedures to mitigate any associated risk or eliminate it where possible. Principals are required to respond to incidents and effectively manage any ongoing hazard.

Responding to incidents of asbestos

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This document is available online at:

[https://edugate.eduweb.vic.gov.au/sites//pages/production.aspx#/app/content/1953/support_and_service_\(schools\)](https://edugate.eduweb.vic.gov.au/sites//pages/production.aspx#/app/content/1953/support_and_service_(schools))

This policy aligns with the following school asset lifecycle stage



If asbestos-containing material is found or disturbed on site, the Principal or the Asbestos Coordinator must contact the VSBA's Asbestos Customer Call Centre on **1300 133 468**, and immediately follow the process in the incident response section of the school's Asbestos Management Plan. The Coordinator must also log the incident in [eduSafe](#), the Department's Incident Reporting and Hazard Management System. Schools should refer to the VSBA's [Asbestos Management Policy](#) for further guidance.

Responding to incidents of other hazardous materials

If there is an incident involving other kinds of hazardous materials, the Principal or occupational health and safety (OHS) representative should take the following steps:

1. assess whether any persons were involved in the incident;
2. provide first aid to anyone who requires it and contact emergency services (e.g. ambulance) if necessary;
3. isolate the site of the incident to minimise exposure to other individuals;



4. take steps to manage the risk (if possible); and
5. log the incident on [eduSafe](#) when the immediate risks are managed.

Ongoing risk management

The Department's [Occupational Health and Safety Management System](#) (OHSMS) provides plans, actions and procedures to systematically manage all health and safety in the workplace (this includes other risks in addition to hazardous materials). Principals are responsible for understanding and implementing the OHSMS in their schools, using the step-by-step [OHSMS Implementation Guide](#).

Within the OHSMS, the [Hazardous Building Materials Procedure](#) specifically outlines steps for schools to take to identify and manage risks associated with asbestos, PCBs, SMFs and lead-based paint. Schools that know or suspect the presence of hazardous materials should refer to the Procedure, which requires Principals and OHS representatives to undertake the following:

- contact Cushman and Wakefield on 1300 133 468 to identify and assess the presence of hazardous building materials;
- communicate the Hazardous Building Material Report (provided by Cushman and Wakefield) to all staff, visitors and contractors who may come into contact with the materials;
- control the risks posed by identified hazardous building materials, following the relevant measures outlined in the [Hazardous Building Materials Procedure](#) document;
- review the controls in consultation with staff each year; and
- ensure that the [OHS Risk Register](#) is kept up to date when hazardous building materials are identified, assessed, controlled and reviewed.

RATIONALE

The VSBA and all Victorian government schools are subject to the *Occupational Health and Safety Act (2004)* and the *Occupational Health and Safety Regulations (2007)*. These outline the responsibilities of

employers and building occupiers in managing the occupational health and safety risks associated with workplace infrastructure. School principals are specifically responsible for ensuring safe work practices in their schools in accordance with *the Occupational Health and Safety Act (2004)*.

The VSBA is committed to providing a safe working and learning environment. To enable principals to meet their duty of care, the VSBA will ensure they are provided with appropriate information and resources to support OHS hazard management.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Asbestos

The safety of school communities is of paramount concern, and that is why the Victorian Government is continuing to invest in the removal of asbestos-containing materials from school sites.

All schools with known asbestos must have an *Asbestos Management Plan* which identifies the location of this hazardous material as well as its form, type and condition. Principals are trained to use their plans to monitor changes in the condition of asbestos and identify potential risks.

More detailed information is available from the [VSBA's Asbestos Management Policy](#).

PCBs, SMFs and lead-based paint

In recent years, the Victorian Government has conducted several programs to remove or reduce the presence of various hazardous materials in schools. In addition to asbestos removal, other targeted programs have substantively eliminated PCBs (formerly used in electrical equipment), SMFs (an asbestos replacement) and exposed lead-based paint from schools. This is not to infer that these materials have been eradicated entirely; however, their presence is now rare and isolated.

Schools should consult the Department's [Hazardous Building Materials Procedure](#) when establishing control regimes and managing potential threats.

CCA-treated timber



In relation to treated timber, the Department does not allow copper chromium arsenate (CCA) to be used in any exposed location where students or members of the public are likely to come into intimate and frequent contact. This means CCA-treated timber must not be used in play equipment, handrails, exterior furniture or seating. For a list of alternative timber products, schools should refer to the relevant Australian Standard: AS5604-2005.

Chemical use and storage

Day-to-day learning, building maintenance and cleaning activities will necessarily incur the presence of various chemicals and the need for their safe storage.

Dangerous goods and hazardous substances may be found in technology areas, art and dark rooms, science laboratories, storage areas, maintenance and garden sheds, kitchens, canteens and swimming pools. Schools should consult the Department's [Chemical Management Procedure](#) in establishing control regimes.

Managing OHS for contractors and volunteer workers on a school site

When engaging individuals who are not employees of the school to undertake works on their site (such as contractors and volunteer workers), principals will also need to manage OHS for these individuals.

To minimise risks associated with hazardous materials, principals must be aware of [Contractor and Volunteer Worker OHS Management procedures](#) and other guidance documents provided on the OHSMS. In particular, principals must use induction checklists and the Safe Work Method Statement to ensure there is an appropriate risk management approach for the potential use of or exposure to hazardous materials by these individuals. Principals should also be aware that volunteer workers are to not perform high risk tasks, as defined in the Contractor OHS Management Procedure.

Illegal dumping on school sites

At active school locations, principals should monitor their sites to ensure that no illegal dumping takes place, and contact the EPA if an incident takes place (severe penalties apply to perpetrators).

School sites are more vulnerable to the illegal dumping of waste materials where they are vacant sites. The VSBA has engaged a maintenance contractor to oversee their upkeep and address such issues.

RELATED DOCUMENTS

Related policies and guidelines:

- [Asbestos Management and Removal Policy](#)
- [Chemical Management Procedure](#)
- [Contractor and Volunteer Worker OHS Management Procedures](#)
- [Department of Education and Training's OHS Management System](#)
- [Department of Education and Training OHSMS Implementation Guide](#)
- The [Environmental Protection Authority](#) provides a list of waste removalists.
- [Guidelines for the Management of PCBs](#)
- [Hazardous Building Materials Procedure](#)
- [Reporting and Management of Incidents and Hazards](#)
- [Use of termiticides in schools – Guidelines](#)

CONTACTS

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KEY WORDS

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