

MACHINES USED FOR ASBESTOS REMOVAL

Overview

The supply of plant or equipment for Asbestos removal requires a process to safeguard personnel against exposure to Asbestos and Asbestos contaminated material (ACM), this includes friable and non-friable asbestos.

Failure to successfully identify and decontaminate machinery can result in hazardous exposure to any personnel who have come into contact with the machinery, such as service technicians and employees/contractors in the workplace.

This information sheet provides guidance on decontamination of machines and equipment, including specific requirements for diesel powered machines.

Recommendations

Companies supplying equipment to Asbestos removalists and demolition should have their employees adequately trained in the identification, awareness, handling and disposal of asbestos. They should also be trained in the use of the specialised PPE.

Companies should be able to immediately identify any machine exposed to Asbestos, in instances where the hirer has not reported its use and what steps are required to quarantine then make safe the machine, until a licenced Asbestos assessor / occupational hygienist can be brought in to inspect the machine.

Have a system in place that ensures the hirer/user confirms the use of the machine is not connected with the removal or handling of Asbestos, or has provided acknowledgement that the machine is connected with the handling of Asbestos and Hazardous Substances, along with the process involved with its planned decontamination.

Machines exposed to Asbestos or other Hazardous Substances are required to be decontaminated by a third-party licenced Asbestos Assessor / Occupational Hygienist. Decontamination must then be undertaken and a "Certificate of Clearance" issued to the hire company/machine owner prior removal from the Asbestos work area.

The licenced Asbestos company is responsible for releasing the machine and equipment after decontamination.

Transport Operators shall only pick up equipment in clean areas off site once the hire company/machine owner confirms that the "Certificate of Clearance" has been issued .

Transport operators should check for visible signs of hazardous materials on the machines before loading, and not move the machine until satisfied its safe to do so.

These recommendations are based on state and federal regulations and the Code of Practice.

An example is from Queensland Workplace Health and Safety stating the need to decontaminate plant and equipment prior to relocation;

1.1 Decontamination of people, plant and equipment

Decontamination facilities must be available for the asbestos removal area, any plant and equipment used in the removal area and workers carrying out the asbestos removal work.

Methods to decontaminate plant and equipment should be utilised. This includes the changing of the pre-filters on the mobile plant air conditioning system, and engine air filter, prior to the relocation of this equipment to another site.

Engine air filters and air intake system.

Combustion engines have air filters to remove dust and other contaminants to prevent particles damaging the internal parts of the engine.

On an Asbestos contaminated site there is a significant risk that Asbestos fibres enter the intake system and lodge within the filter, housing and other features.

Other systems such as the hydraulic circuit and fuel system could be susceptible if an open filter and/or breather is fitted. Verify within the "Certificate of Clearance" paperwork that the air intake filters have been replaced.

What should the rental company do?

- Avoid if possible, the use of a MEWPs in friable Asbestos environments.
- Where a MEWP is required, consider the use of electric powered machines over diesel.
- Prior to hire identify the features on the intake, hydraulic and fuel systems that need to be replaced/cleaned.
- This includes the filters, rubber boots and breathers plus the air intake housing /piping.
- Supply replacement filters and parts to be fitted to the machine during decontamination.
- After off-hire confirm that decontamination has been completed and a "Certificate of Clearance" is provided.
- If no certificate is provided or there is suspected asbestos contamination then quarantine the machine immediately, and seek assistance.
- The decontamination must be validated by an independent licenced Asbestos Assessor or an Occupational Hygienist.

On-site breakdowns

The equipment owner must alert the repair person before going to site, to allow for proper PPE preparation. This could include hose doctors, re-fueling companies and service technicians.

Hire process for Asbestos contaminated sites

The following process covers the pre-hire and off-hire process of machines used on Asbestos/Hazardous Substances contaminated sites.

All machine owners should ensure that they review and adopt appropriate procedures to reduce the risk of exposure to Asbestos and/or silica dust or other hazardous materials or substances.



Customer order received

Ensure machine servicing and tagging have been updated, records reflect use in Hazardous environment.

If the machine is Diesel powered, supply additional air filter(s) for replacement after use. Supply filters in sealed bags.

Machine delivered to site



Machine off hired

Air filters are changed during decontamination process

Decontamination certificate provided by 3rd party; sent to supplier of machine

Machine returned to supplier

Machine is identified to service department



Standard inspections

Service department ensures decontamination certificate present.

If decontamination certificate present; commence standard servicing.

If decontamination certificate not present, quarantine the machine until certificate received, then commence standard servicing.



Non-standard inspections

Where a service person is aware or has suspicion of Asbestos or Hazardous Substances.

- Technician should clothe themselves with previously prepared asbestos clothing kits consisting of: Asbestos respirator, disposable overalls, gloves, boot coverings and hair coverings.
- Ensure owner/customer/operator are aware of potential exposure
- Contaminated material should be double bagged and sent for analysis, if in an area not quarantined or signed for Asbestos contamination.
- The machine must be quarantined until results are confirmed, if exposure was not planned and outside a controlled area.
- If asbestos present, contact the customer.
A decontamination process must be established and area quarantined.

Conclusion

- If in doubt, wear appropriate PPE to protect yourself and contact operator, contractor, builder, hirer and/or owner if suspected contamination has occurred.
- Company's should develop a procedure to follow, in the event Asbestos or Hazardous Material is found on a machine. This should include immediate response, signage, machine tagging, correct PPE, methods for testing and inspection, plus the handling and disposal of asbestos.
- Asbestos related PPE should be readily available to persons who could be exposed.
- Ensure any suspect material is double bagged, machine is quarantined. Seek advice.
- If machine has previously been cleared with a certificate and suspicious material is still found, contact company for rework stating the remaining presence of potentially Hazardous Materials, and follow advice.
- An area should be available to place machines, suspected of being exposed to Asbestos or Hazardous Materials.
- Companies should have employee's adequately trained, if working with demolition or Asbestos removal machinery.