Construction workers must be trained in asbestos awareness

What is the Law?

Section 19 (3) (f) of the Work Health and Safety Act 2011 provides that a PCBU [a person conducting a business or undertaking, e.g. an employer] must ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that they provide any information, training, instruction or supervision that is necessary to protect all persons from risks to their health and safety arising from their work.

Who does this guidance note apply to?

WorkSafe ACT considers that, given the widespread presence of asbestos in the built environment, and the tendency for workers to work across the various sectors within the industry during the course of their employment, all construction workers should be provided with training in respect of asbestos awareness.

Who does this guidance note not apply to?

This guidance note does not deal with PCBUs whose workers:

- assess, or make recommendations on the condition of asbestos
- remove, handle or use asbestos in any way
- transport or dispose of asbestos

Additional mandated licensing and/or training provisions are required for these workers.

What is WorkSafe ACTs requirement?

In order to meet their safety duties, PCBUs are expected to have evidence to show that construction workers have received adequate information and training to enable them:

- to understand the dangers of asbestos,
- be aware of its likely presence and locations,
- identify asbestos, and
- most importantly know what to do when its presence is likely or confirmed.

How can the requirement be satisfied?

The ACT’s Construction Industry Training Council has worked with key industry stakeholders and local training organisations to develop an asbestos awareness course that fulfils this requirement.

It is proposed that under the Work Health and Safety Act 2011, the new course, Asbestos Awareness 10314 NAT, will be mandatory for all construction workers [as well as workers in some other occupations] from early in 2014.

This requirement will be clarified when changes to the Work Health and Safety legislation, currently being developed, are considered by the Legislative Assembly.

In the meantime, WorkSafe ACT recognises asbestos awareness training provided by the following organisations as meeting the current requirements of the legislation with regard to construction workers:

- Capital Training Institute
- Creative Safety Initiatives (CSI)
- HIA
- MBA

Further information

For more information on asbestos and training requirements please visit www.asbestos.act.gov.au. WorkSafe ACT can also be contacted on 6207 3000.