

# Asbestos-containing pipes in municipal underground works projects

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## The issue

Asbestos containing pipe networks are aging and failing.

Increasingly being decommissioned and replaced.

No standard practice on remediation of uncovered AC pipes.



# Frequently asked questions-FAQ

## Frequently asked questions

### Asbestos-containing pipes in municipal underground works projects

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#### What are asbestos-containing (AC) pipes?

The network of decommissioned pipe that has served as water main lines, waste water main lines, secondary lines, and service lines is comprised of cement that contains asbestos. Aged, failing pipe, from which the cementitious binding materials have leached, can be up to 80 percent asbestos.

When the pipe is decommissioned and the water that ran through it is removed, the asbestos-containing pipe collapses, fractures, and degrades into small pieces, becoming friable asbestos.

#### What are the risks to workers?

Friable asbestos, especially when degraded, poses risk of asbestos exposure to workers. When disturbed, friable asbestos fibres can be easily released into the air and inhaled. Unsafe and accumulated exposure to asbestos is a well-documented risk factor for a number of diseases, including asbestosis, lung cancer, and mesothelioma.

#### What responsibilities do employers have?

When planning and bidding for municipal work, municipalities and contractors need to consider the management of decommissioned asbestos-containing pipes in the work zone.

Occupational Health and Safety Regulation 6.7(1) requires friable asbestos-containing materials in the workplace to be controlled by removal, enclosure, or encapsulation. Both municipalities and contractors working on underground municipal works projects should contemplate the management of AC pipes.

- As it's impractical to enclose or encapsulate AC pipes, employers must ensure that decommissioned pipes are removed from the work area and appropriately disposed of.
- You must maintain an asbestos inventory of all AC pipes extending beyond the work area.
- You must have an exposure control plan for asbestos that includes safe work procedures for the removal of AC pipe.



## Decommissioned asbestos containing pipe

Decommissioned cement pipe that contains asbestos  
water main lines, waste water main lines, secondary lines, service lines, etc.....

When decommissioned

Fractures, degrades into small pieces, becomes friable

Aged, failing pipe can be up to **80%** asbestos.



## Risks to workers

### Degraded pipe = risk of asbestos exposure



Friable asbestos can be easily released into the air and inhaled

Well-documented risk factor for:

Asbestosis, lung cancer, mesothelioma.



# Employer responsibilities

All friable asbestos-containing materials in the workplace must be controlled by removal, enclosure or encapsulation so as to prevent the release of airborne asbestos fibre. (OHSR 6.7(1))

Maintain an asbestos inventory of all AC pipes extending beyond the work area. (OHSR 6.4)

Have an exposure control plan for asbestos including safe work procedures for the removal of AC pipe (OHSR 6.4)

(This is not a regulation change!)



# Impractical to enclose or encapsulate AC pipes

Abandoning to ground does not effectively encapsulate or enclose.

Pipe in good shape now will degrade and present a risk to future workers

Appropriately remove and dispose.





## Area of focus- within the excavation

You must remove all decommissioned AC pipes within the confines of the excavation in underground municipal works projects.

You're not required to remove AC pipe that extends beyond your excavation.





## Safe disposal - Inventory

Employers are required to maintain an inventory of AC pipes that remain buried.

You must use safe disposal methods when removing decommissioned AC pipes uncovered during underground work (see Occupational Health and Safety Regulation 6.25–6.28).



## Where can I go for more information?

Information is available through your local Prevention officer.

You can also:

- Call WorkSafeBC's Prevention Information Line at 604.276.3100 in the Lower Mainland or toll-free at 1.888.621.7233 (1.888.621.SAFE).
- Find out more about Part 6 of the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation at [worksafebc.com](http://worksafebc.com)

