Disclaimer
This Guide provides general information about the obligations of persons conducting a business or undertaking and/or persons in control of premises and workers under the Work Health and Safety Act 2011. The Guide gives some suggestions for complying with these obligations. However, this Guide is not intended to represent a comprehensive statement of the law as it applies to particular problems or to individuals or as a substitute for legal advice. Full details of legal obligations and responsibilities are set out in the Work Health and Safety Act 2011. If you refer to the legislation you should take care to ensure that you use the most up-to-date version, available from www.legislation.act.gov.au. You should seek legal advice if you need assistance on the application of the law to your situation.

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INTRODUCTION

DOES YOUR VEHICLE CONTAIN MATERIALS MADE FROM ASBESTOS?

There are many vehicles still in use that have asbestos containing brake pads/shoes, gaskets or clutch plates fitted. When you are performing maintenance work on your vehicle you need to be aware of the possibility of being exposed to asbestos.

In most vehicles, identification of asbestos containing parts may be difficult, if not impossible. If you are unsure of whether the parts do contain asbestos you should apply the same protective measures you would apply if you were sure that the parts did contain asbestos.

Asbestos containing brake pads, brake shoes and clutch plates suffer wear during use, leaving a coating of asbestos fibres and dust on them and surrounding parts. Asbestos containing cylinder head and exhaust gaskets can become friable (powdery) with heat and readily release dust and fibres when disturbed. Dry brushing any of these parts or even tapping them can release asbestos fibres into the air.

Since 31 December 2003, the use of all forms of asbestos has been banned nationally (with only a few very specific exemptions).

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

All types of asbestos can break into fibres so small they can only be seen with a microscope. They are often so small that once they get into the air, they remain airborne and can be inhaled into the lungs, making it difficult for the body to remove them.

Asbestos is only a risk to health if asbestos fibres are released into the air and breathed in. In some people, this may lead to asbestos-related diseases. These are mainly cancers of the lungs, cancers of the chest lining (mesothelioma) and asbestosis, which is a non-cancerous condition. Generally speaking, the higher the level of exposure to asbestos, the higher the risk to health. Therefore, the aim should be to prevent any exposure at all.

Health problems usually occur when people are unaware of the hazards of working with materials containing asbestos. It is important that you always work so there is minimal release of dust or small particles from the materials containing asbestos. If you use commonsense and follow safety guidelines, materials containing asbestos should not be a problem.
SAFE WORK PROCEDURES

Minimise the risks by applying the following safety control measures when working on your vehicle’s brakes, clutches and cylinder head/exhaust gaskets:

> avoid windy locations and cooling fans to prevent fibres being dispersed.
> wear "disposable coveralls and a "P1 or P2 disposable dust respirator (Australian Standard Approved) - ensure that you follow the instructions on the packet on how to wear the respirator correctly.
> tape a "thick plastic sheet (200 micron) on the floor under the removal area to catch any spillage and to make clean-up easier.
> during the dismantling and removal procedure, use a "hand held spray bottle to continually dampen the dust in order to prevent fibres from being dispersed. After you have done this you should wipe down the parts in the immediate vicinity with a wet rag.
> use rags only once, then place in a "plastic bag (200 micron) or wrap in a "plastic sheet (200 micron) for disposal. See ‘Safe disposal’.
> wipe any spillage onto the ground or floor and dispose of in the same way.
> *Your hardware store can supply all of the materials and equipment you will need.

Note: Used respirators and coveralls should be disposed of in the same way as other asbestos waste. See ‘Safe disposal’.

IMPORTANT!

> A domestic or standard vacuum cleaner must NOT be used for cleaning dust containing asbestos, as the asbestos will pass right through the filter and blow back into the air. If you use a vacuum cleaner it must be an industrial type fitted with a high efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filter.

SAFE DISPOSAL

Dispose of all asbestos waste promptly. For safety always:

> wrap asbestos waste in thick plastic or place in a thick plastic bag (200 micron), tape and label with "CAUTION ASBESTOS, DO NOT INHALE DUST". Do not put asbestos waste in domestic garbage bins. Remove all asbestos waste from the site as soon as possible and clean the area thoroughly.
> dispose of asbestos waste in a manner and at a site approved by ACT NOWaste. Asbestos can only be dumped at approved disposal sites. ACT NOWaste can advise you of the location of these sites. See Help and advice over the page for contact numbers.
HELP AND ADVICE

For health and safety advice related to asbestos when undertaking home vehicle mechanics contact Access Canberra.

**Access Canberra**

Phone: 02 6207 3000  
Fax: 02 6205 0336  
Email: worksafe@act.gov.au

For further information related to the removal of asbestos and the control of hazards associated with asbestos view the NOHSC website:

**ACT NOWaste**

Phone: 02 6207 2500  
Fax: 02 6207 6341  