

# B.C. enacts new asbestos abatement requirements

By Jesse Marchand

Changes to the *Workers Compensation Act* have new requirements for anyone performing asbestos abatement.

The provincial government recently introduced changes to the *Workers Compensation Act* to offer new protections to help keep workers safe from the danger of asbestos.

## What are the changes to the Act?

The amendments establish requirements that asbestos abatement contractors must be licensed to operate in British Columbia, and that workers and employers who perform this work must complete mandatory safety training and certification.

## Why are these changes happening?

Statistics from WorkSafeBC show asbestos-related diseases are the leading cause of workplace deaths in British Columbia. From 2008 to 2017, 617 workers died from diseases related to asbestos exposure.

To address the ongoing concern of asbestos exposure at work, the government established a cross-ministry asbestos working group in 2017. The group included WorkSafeBC and had members from the Ministries of Labour; Environment and Climate Change Strategy; Municipal Affairs; Housing; and Health. They met with various stakeholders including industry associations, municipalities, and unions, to make the recommendations proposed in the bill.

## What's next?

WorkSafeBC has multiple streams of work underway to ensure the requirements are implemented effectively, including:

- Developing the standards that asbestos safety training and certification programs must comply with
- Developing a licensing scheme for asbestos abatement contractors



- Amending the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation to align with the changes to the *Workers Compensation Act*, and support the certification and licensing schemes
- Identifying who will act as the training and certifying bodies for asbestos abatement workers
- Providing time for workers to be certified

Active participation from workers, employers, and other stakeholders will be critical to help shape specific deliverables. For example, WorkSafeBC recently engaged stakeholders in job-task analysis sessions to develop, describe, and validate the duties and functions of workers who conduct asbestos abatement and to help identify the frequency and criticality of specific duties. The input from these sessions will support the development of the training and certification program.

## Where can I get more information?

WorkSafeBC will continue to provide updates on the various workstreams and opportunities to provide feedback as our implementation plan progresses.

You can read the working group report, *Keeping Workers, the Public and the Environment Safe from Asbestos* at [engage.gov.bc.ca](https://engage.gov.bc.ca).

You can also visit [worksafebc.com](https://worksafebc.com) for more information on the hazards of asbestos exposure and WorkSafeBC's prevention activities to address them. Find relevant pages by searching for:

- [Asbestos health and safety information](#)
- [Asbestos inspectional initiative \(commercial\)](#)
- [Asbestos inspectional initiative \(residential\)](#) ⓘ