

Occupational health and safety (OHS) training for asbestos workers

Course Guidelines

Occupational Health and Safety for the Asbestos Worker

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1.0 Introduction

This document summarizes the course content, worker re-certification and administrative procedure requirements for agencies approved to deliver the course “Occupational Health and Safety for the Asbestos Worker”.

Under Section 37(2) of the Alberta Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Code, workers who enter a *restricted area* must take a course approved by a Director of Occupational Hygiene. A *restricted area* is defined in the OHS legislation as an area of the work site where there is a reasonable chance that the airborne concentration of asbestos exceeds or may exceed the occupational exposure limit. All individuals, regardless of their training, experience, duties or authority at the work site who enter a restricted area must have a valid Asbestos Worker Card in their possession at the work site.

In this document, an *asbestos worker* is an individual who works with asbestos or performs asbestos abatement activities and has no supervisory duties. *Asbestos abatement* includes removal, enclosure or encapsulation of asbestos materials. This course covers the basic information needed to protect the health and safety of workers involved in abatement projects. It is meant to teach basic concepts and provide awareness about the hazards of asbestos. By itself, the course will not ensure the competency of workers as defined by the OHS Code, since competency is a combination of training and experience.

2.0 Course Criteria

The “Occupational Health and Safety for the Asbestos Worker” course must meet the following criteria:

- (a) The course must contain at least 14 net instructional hours (**see Note**).
- (b) The practical and theoretical element components must each be at least five net hours long.
- (c) Successful completion of the course requires at least an 80 percent grade on a written examination and a “pass” rating on the practical portion.
- (d) Workers must be provided with their original valid Asbestos Worker Card upon successful completion of the course.
- (e) The course content must cover the topics as outlined in Section 3 of this document.
- (f) In addition to course materials developed by the agency, students must be provided with;
 - i. a hard copy of the materials listed in Section 3 of this document or

- ii. an electronic copy if the agency can ensure that students are able to access the materials electronically.
- (g) The classroom and shop (or field station) must have appropriate equipment and facilities necessary to provide the course essentials. Examples of the types of equipment and facilities are provided in Section 3 of this document.
- (h) Workers with training qualifications from other jurisdictions may challenge the course exam (see Section 4).
- (i) Asbestos worker cards expire three years from the date of issue. Worker re-certification requirements are described in Section 5.
- (j) Course instructors must meet the criteria specified in Section 6.
- (k) An agency providing this course must be approved by Alberta Labour and Immigration. An application to become an approved asbestos worker training agency must be made in accordance with the procedures in Section 7 of this document. This section also outlines the administrative procedures that agencies must follow. Agency approval may be revoked for agencies that do not follow the administrative procedures
- (l) Agencies are responsible for issuing replacement cards should a worker's card be lost or damaged (See Section 7.6).
- (m) Agencies are responsible for ensuring all course materials are compliant with applicable copyright legislation.

NOTE: It is expected complete worker training may be longer and would include time for job preparation and work procedures. This document only addresses the health and safety component of the training program and does not focus on the knowledge and skills for actual abatement procedures. These procedures (e.g. spray on removal, piping removal, glove bagging, enclosure construction, encapsulation options, outdoor work, waste removal, etc.) are best acquired through a supervised on-the-job training program over a length of time until the worker is competent in abatement and disposal techniques. The length of the on-the-job training will vary according to the type and/or level of prior skills brought to the job. This 14-hour portion of the course is meant to prepare a worker to protect themselves from the health and safety hazards associated with exposure to asbestos.

3.0 Course Content and Materials

3.1 Theory Components

After completion of the training program the student will be able to:

- (a) Identify and describe the health effects associated with exposure to asbestos.
- (b) Describe the combined health effects of smoking and asbestos exposure.
- (c) State the Alberta Occupational Exposure Limit (OEL) for asbestos.
- (d) Explain specific worker responsibilities relevant to asbestos abatement work in the *OHS Act*, Regulation and Code.

- (e) State the other work site parties responsible for health and safety in the *OHS Act* and describe their roles and responsibilities.
- (f) Understand the role of joint work site health and safety committees and health and safety representatives generally in OHS and specifically in asbestos abatement work.
- (g) Understand the roles and responsibilities towards the prevention of violence and harassment in the workplace.
- (h) Define “exposed worker” and understand the health assessment requirements for exposed workers.
- (i) List the criteria for evaluating the potential for asbestos contamination of the work area and surrounding area.
- (j) Identify other health and safety hazards on abatement projects not directly associated with asbestos exposure (electrocution, slips, trips and falls, cold, heat, scaffolding, etc.).
- (k) Understand how a respirator code of practice is used to select, use and maintain a respiratory protective equipment and describe, in basic terms, the limitations, advantages and disadvantages of various types of respiratory protective equipment (half and full face air purifying respirators, powered and non-powered air purifying respirators, supplied air, and self-contained breathing apparatus).
- (l) Identify and discuss the typical types of asbestos removal equipment and tools.
- (m) Describe the procedures and methods used to enclose and isolate the work area.
- (n) Explain the methods for minimizing release of asbestos fibres into the air.
- (o) Explain how a negative pressure system works.
- (p) Explain the setup of a typical decontamination facility and the procedures for its use and maintenance.
- (q) Describe asbestos waste disposal procedures.
- (r) Discuss procedures and selection of the equipment, tools, materials, and controls required for a particular low, moderate, or high risk work site.
- (s) Discuss the need for good hygiene practices on the job with regards to eating, drinking, and smoking.
- (t) Discuss emergency situations (e.g. fire, injury) and procedures that must be followed in case of an emergency.

3.2 Practical Components

The following practical exercises must be included. Additional practical exercises relevant to asbestos abatement projects may also be provided.

- (a) Show examples of typical types of asbestos removal equipment and tools.
- (b) Discuss, demonstrate and practice techniques used to set up and repair an asbestos containment.
- (c) Discuss the major component parts of an air filtration system (HEPA unit), and the potential for damage to the HEPA filter.
- (d) Demonstrate decontamination of equipment and facility.
- (e) Demonstrate preparation of waste materials for disposal.
- (f) Don and doff typical respirators, conduct simple visual checks and perform maintenance on the equipment (i.e. changing a filter or valve).

- (g) Don and doff other protective equipment (such as protective clothing) that may be used.
- (h) Show how negative pressure systems are tested.
- (i) Visually inspect the first and second filters of a two-stage HEPA pre-filtering system to determine if replacement is required, and replace them when necessary.
- (j) Discuss/practice typical work procedures on abatement projects (e.g. glove bag removal).

3.3 Learning Materials

In addition to course materials developed by the agency, the following materials must be provided to the trainee (mandatory items): If the trainee does not have access to electronic sources hard copies must be provided.

Legislation:

- *Occupational Health and Safety Act*
- Occupational Health and Safety Regulation
- Occupational Health and Safety Code

The OHS legislation is available from:

Alberta Queen's Printer
7th Floor, Park Plaza
10611 – 98 Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta T5K 2P7
Phone: (780) 427 – 4952
Fax: (780) 452 – 0668
Website: www.qp.alberta.ca

NOTE: There is a charge for printed copies of the legislation. The OHS legislation is also available for download on the Alberta Government website at: <https://www.alberta.ca/ohs-act-regulation-code.aspx>

Additional publications that may also be included with the course materials (optional items):

- Asbestos Abatement Manual
- Asbestos at the Work Site
- Asbestos Containing Materials in Buildings to be Demolished

NOTE: These publications are available from the Alberta Government OHS website at

<https://ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/>

Printed copies of the Asbestos Abatement Manual may also be purchased from Queen's Printer.

3.4 Examples of Course Equipment and Facilities

Classroom Area (mandatory items)

- First aid equipment and certified personnel
- Fire extinguishers and evacuation procedures
- Adequate seating for individuals
- Appropriate toilet facilities
- Adequate instructional materials and demonstration equipment

Classroom or Shop Area

- Air monitoring/testing equipment
- Respirators (one per individual)
- Disposable clothing
- Rubber boots

Shop Area (or remote site)

- Enclosure with decontamination facility (exhaust unit, worker access, airlocks, etc.), including a transfer room and clean room
- Air movement and filtration system
- Vacuum system (HEPA)
- Hand tools, cleaning tools
- Polyethylene sheeting, bags, labels, tape

4.0 Exam Challenge

An exam challenge opportunity may be offered to workers who have taken asbestos training in another jurisdiction or through another organization outside of Alberta or have completed OHS officer asbestos training conducted by Alberta Labour and Immigration. These workers may take the final written exam without first taking the full two-day Occupational Health and Safety for the Asbestos Worker course. Note that:

- This process is not for workers with expired Alberta Asbestos Worker Cards.
- Workers who have already successfully completed the Alberta asbestos worker course delivered by an approved training provider must follow the worker re-certification process to renew their cards.
- To qualify for the training equivalency option, a worker must provide documentation to the approved training agency showing that they have completed asbestos training in another jurisdiction within the past three years (name of course, date, location).
- To qualify as an OHS officer, the worker must be currently employed by Alberta Labour and Immigration and have completed the Alberta Labour and Immigration officer training program for asbestos. Individuals who are no longer employed by Alberta Labour and Immigration will not qualify for this option. Cards for individuals who qualify will be directly issued by Alberta Labour and Immigration.

Training agencies must retain copies of documentation provided by workers who successfully challenge the asbestos worker exam and make the information available to Alberta Labour and Immigration upon request.

Workers must have basic knowledge of the Alberta OHS legislation if they will be working at Alberta work sites.

Workers who challenge the exam and do not receive a mark of 80 percent or better must complete the full two-day course to receive their card. OHS officers who do not receive a mark of 80 percent or better must retake the Alberta Labour and Immigration asbestos training course.

5.0 Worker Recertification

Asbestos Worker Cards expire three years from the date of issue. For an asbestos worker to re-certify, they must meet the following criteria:

- a) The worker must have successfully completed the course Occupational Health and Safety for the Asbestos Worker, or successfully challenged the exam and have a valid, not expired Asbestos Worker Card.
- b) The worker must successfully complete a recertification exam administered by an approved agency with a minimum passing grade of 80 percent. The worker may take a re-certification exam from any approved agency.
- c) Re-certification must be done by the expiry date of the worker's current card.
- d) A worker who does not pass the exam must retake the two-day course Occupational Health and Safety for the Asbestos Worker offered by an approved agency.

Re-certification exams consist of 50 randomly selected multiple choice questions from a pool of questions provided by the Alberta Labour and Immigration (see Section 7.4). There are at least ten questions randomly selected from each of the following categories:

- Regulatory requirements applying to asbestos abatement
- Health issues associated with asbestos
- Work procedures related to asbestos abatement projects
- Personal protective equipment
- Other health and safety issues (e.g. heat stress)

Approved agencies must download the exams from the Alberta Government website.

Individuals with certain professional designations are required to have knowledge and skills related to asbestos well in excess of the minimum requirements set out in the two-day asbestos worker course. The requirement to take the re-certification exam is waived for individuals who hold a valid Asbestos Worker Card and who are a member in good standing in at least one of the following organizations:

- **American Board of Industrial Hygiene**, with one of the following designations:
 - Certified Industrial Hygienist, CIH
- **Canadian Registration Board of Occupational Hygienists**, with one of the following designations:
 - Registered Occupational Hygienist, ROH
 - Registered Occupational Hygiene Technologist, ROHT
- **Council on Certification of Health, Environmental and Safety Technologists**, with the following designation:
 - Certified Occupational Health and Safety Technologist, COHST

Course instructors who have been approved for an approved agency are also not required to take the re-certification exam, providing that they have taught the course at least twice in the past three years.

Members of the above organizations and course instructors may apply for a new card from the agency that issued their original card at any time prior to the expiry date of their current card. These individuals must provide proof (such as membership cards) indicating that they are a member in good standing prior to receiving their new Asbestos Worker Card.

6.0 Instructor Qualifications

The instructor of an Occupational Health and Safety for the Asbestos Worker course must have the following:

- (a) Proof of completion of an Occupational Health and Safety for the Asbestos Worker course from an approved training agency.
- (b) Documented experience of having taught the course a minimum of two times with an approved instructor.
- (c) Proof of successful completion of an instructional training program from a recognized agency totaling at least ten hours duration covering the following areas:
 - Principles of instruction
 - Aspects of motivation
 - Lesson planning
 - Lecture and demonstration techniques
 - Use of training aids
 - Methods of evaluating student performance

AND

- (d) Education and experience in the fields of health and safety and asbestos abatement.

NOTES:

- i) Instructors must have experience in actual abatement and removal techniques in various industrial applications.
- ii) Instructors must be approved by Alberta Labour and Immigration.
- iii) Instructor approval is attached to the specific agency and is not transferable. The agency must ensure instructors meet the instructor requirements and submit a request that includes supporting documentation to Alberta Labour and Immigration for approval (see Section 7.3).
- iv) To maintain their approval status, instructors must teach a minimum of two courses in a three-year period.

7.0 Administrative Requirements

7.1 Application to Become an Approved Agency

The agency making an application for approval to provide the course titled “Occupational Health and Safety for the Asbestos Worker” must forward the application to a Director of Occupational Hygiene at:

**Specialized Professional Services
Alberta Labour and Immigration
8th floor, 10808-99 Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta
T5K 0G5**

The application can be forwarded electronically to JET.WHS-Asbestos@gov.ab.ca

The application must include:

- (a) Complete details of the topics to be covered in the course.
- (b) Breakdown of the time allotment for topics (theory and practical).
- (c) Copies of the training materials developed by the agency which will be provided to students.
- (d) Criteria for evaluating instructor skills in asbestos removal and abatement techniques.
- (e) Description of the practical exercises.
- (f) Diagram, plans or photographs of the enclosure; or specifications, description or photographs of the field station.
- (g) List of equipment, tools, supplies to be used.
- (h) Names and credentials of instructors.
- (i) Procedures for evaluating candidates who wish to challenge the course exam without first taking the course.
- (j) Procedures for evaluating candidates who have difficulty with English or with literacy problems. The agency must keep records when alternate procedures (e.g. oral exams, translated exams) are used to evaluate candidates.
- (k) Procedures for issuing cards, including replacement cards.
- (l) Documentation of specific procedures and policies to ensure compliance with privacy legislation.

- (m) Proof that the agency has insurance that covers their training activities.
- (n) The agency must have a policy and procedure for receiving and resolving complaints from students, instructors or other interested parties. Documentation of this must be included with the application.

Approval for the course, learning materials, field station and specified instructors will be provided in the form of a letter from a Director of Occupational Hygiene. The application and learning materials will be held on file by Alberta Labour and Immigration. Changes, deletions or additions to the learning materials must be provided to Alberta Labour and Immigration for approval prior to incorporation.

7.2 Ongoing Course Administration

Approved agencies must comply with the following administrative procedures:

- a) The agency must maintain a list of current students and previous graduates complete with card issue dates and card numbers. The agency must have policies and procedures in place to ensure compliance with privacy legislation.
- b) Within 48 hours following the completion of a training course, a list of successful students trained must be provided to Alberta Labour and Immigration.
- c) Cards are not valid until they are entered into the Alberta Government cardholder database.
- d) The agency may issue cards to workers who successfully challenge the exam. The worker name and card number issued must be provided to Alberta Labour and Immigration within 48 hours of issue.
- e) Asbestos Worker Cards will be provided to the agency from Alberta Labour and Immigration.
- f) The Asbestos Worker Cards are numbered. Agencies must issue the cards in numerical sequence.
- g) The numbers for any blank cards that are destroyed or lost must be provided to Alberta Labour and Immigration immediately following that occurrence.
- h) A maximum of 25 cards will be provided at a time, unless the agency identifies that more are required for a specific course occurrence.
- i) New cards will not be issued if there are blocks of OPEN cards still present in the cardholder database.
- j) The agency must be able to provide an accounting to Alberta Labour and Immigration for all cards issued to them on request.
- k) Schedules for course offerings, including the number of students registered, time and place of course, must be provided to Alberta Labour and Immigration at least five working days in advance of the course.
- l) Fees for completing the course, challenging the exam, re-certification exams and issuance of replacement cards are to be determined by the agencies.
- m) Alberta Labour and Immigration reserves the right to inspect, monitor, audit and evaluate the instruction and administration of an agency's course at any time without prior notification.
- n) Changes, deletions or additions to the course learning materials must be provided to Alberta Labour and Immigration for approval prior to use.

- o) Approval to run the course will be ongoing provided the conditions are unchanged. Alberta Labour and Immigration reserves the right to revoke approved agency status for those agencies that do not comply with the course guidelines or who have not provided a training course within a three year period.

7.3 Instructor Approval

Course approval includes the specific instructors attached to the agency. Each agency must apply to Alberta Labour and Immigration for approval of their instructors. If an instructor leaves an agency, their approval as an instructor for the course is no longer valid.

To have an instructor approved, the agency must:

- a) Send a letter to the Director of Occupational Hygiene, Alberta Labour and Immigration, requesting that a particular individual be approved as an instructor for the course Occupational Health and Safety for the Asbestos Worker.
- b) With the letter, the agency must include the following supporting information:
 - Proof of completion of an “Occupational Health and Safety for the Asbestos Worker” course from an approved training agency (or documentation of equivalent training).
 - Documented experience of having taught the course a minimum of two times with an approved instructor.
 - Proof of successful completion of an instructional training program from a recognized agency totaling at least 10 hours duration covering the following areas:
 - Principles of instruction
 - Aspects of motivation
 - Lesson planning
 - Lecture and demonstration techniques
 - Use of training aids
 - Methods of evaluating student performance
 - Education and experience in the fields of health and safety and asbestos abatement.

A letter will be issued to the agency once the instructor is approved. This letter must be kept on file by the agency while the instructor is teaching the course for them. Alberta Labour and Immigration must be advised when an instructor leaves an agency. Agencies must provide a current listing of all of their approved instructors to Alberta Labour and Immigration on request.

7.4 Exam

The exam that students complete for the course and re-certification must be downloaded from the Alberta Labour and Immigration exam download web area. When an agency is approved, a specific individual must be designated as the

contact with access to the exam download web area. Specific passwords will be issued to the individual who will access the download area. **One** new exam must be downloaded for each specific course, exam challenge or re-certification session. If an agency has trouble accessing the download area or downloading an exam, they must contact the Asbestos Program Administrator. If necessary, the Administrator may download an exam and send it to the agency.

When a course is administered, the instructor may not specifically provide the exam questions and answers to the students during the course.

If agencies find errors in exam questions or have suggestions for rewording or new questions, they should submit this information in writing to the Asbestos Program Administrator.

Agencies must have a written policy or procedure in place regarding the following:

- a) Administering the course and exam to workers whose first language is not English
- b) Administering exam to workers who have literacy limitations (e.g. cannot read written English)
- c) Procedures for addressing circumstances when a student fails an exam. This must include an evaluation of why the student failed (e.g. English as a second language, literacy, did not learn required material). One exam re-write may be offered by the agency for the student before they must re-take the course unless there is a good rationale for allowing an additional re-write. Under no circumstances will the agency allow the student to re-write the exam more than twice.
- d) If an oral exam is given, it must be a verbatim presentation of the exam questions (either in English or the worker's first language). The questions should be read verbatim along with the answers and the worker indicates the answer they feel is the best.

7.5 Issuance of Asbestos Worker Cards

- a) Once a student has successfully completed the course, the agency must issue an original Asbestos Worker Card to them.
- b) A laminated card bearing the title of the course, name of the student, the name of the instructor, the name of the agency, student identification number, card expiry date and a photograph of the student must be provided to the successful students.
- c) Photocopies of cards are not acceptable. The agency must use the cards provided by Alberta Labour and Immigration.
- d) Cards must have an expiry date of three years from the date of successful course completion.
- e) The cards must be laminated and include a photo showing the head and shoulders of the worker to whom the card is issued.
- f) Cards without an expiry date are not valid.

- g) When an agency issues a new card for re-certification, they must collect the old card and send it to Alberta Labour and Immigration.

7.6 Issuance of Replacement Asbestos Worker Cards

When a worker loses their original, valid asbestos card, they must contact their original training agency or Alberta Labour and Immigration to have a new card issued. Only that agency or Alberta Labour and Immigration may issue a replacement card. The agency is responsible to ensure that they are issuing a replacement card to a worker who has successfully completed the asbestos worker course, challenged the exam or re-certified within the past three years.

The process for issuing a replacement card is as follows:

- a) Check the worker's photo identification (e.g. driver's license) and ensure that worker has successfully completed the course or re-certified within the past three years.
- b) Have worker read and sign "Record of Asbestos Worker Training Card Replacement" form (attached in Appendix 1). If there are issues with literacy or English as a first language, the agency must have a process to read the form to the worker so they understand what they are signing.
- c) Have worker sign the back of the new card and affix a recent photograph of the worker to the card.
- d) The agency signs the card and adds the expiry date (three years from date of original card issue).
- e) Laminate the card and provide the card to worker.
- f) Return completed form and record of old and new card numbers to Alberta Labour and Immigration following new card issue.

8.0 Course Audits

An agency may be audited at any time, without notice. Approval of agencies is conditional on completion of an audit. Course audits will consist of an audit of the course itself (delivery, content, course materials) as well as a review of agency administrative procedures and documentation.

Course audits will be conducted under the following circumstances:

- Course approval (approval of a course is conditional upon completion of an audit. This audit must be completed within six months of a course receiving conditional approval.)
- Complaints regarding the course or agency are received by Alberta Labour and Immigration
- Extensive changes have been made to course materials or to the legislative requirements on asbestos
- There is evidence of repeated non-compliance with course guidelines or administrative requirements

One component of the course audit is to evaluate the agency administrative procedures and documentation. Information that will be checked includes:

- Agency approval letter
- Training records
- Records on certificates granted
- Length of time that records are retained
- Instructor qualifications and approval letter
- Documentation that course material is reviewed on a regular basis
- Documentation on agency privacy policy
- Complaint resolution process
- Procedures for accommodating students with language or literacy issues
- Exam challenge process
- Re-certification process
- Procedures for issuing replacement cards

Appendix 1: Forms and Templates

Record of Asbestos Worker Training Card Replacement

Reason for Card Replacement:

- Damaged (original card must be returned)
- Lost (if found, must be returned to Alberta Labour and Immigration)
- i) I hereby confirm that I understand that I am not permitted to lend my training card to another worker or to use another worker's card.
- ii) In the case where I find my lost card (that has been replaced), I will promptly return it to the Alberta Labour and Immigration, 8th Floor Labour Building, 10808-99 Avenue, Edmonton, AB, T5K 0G5.
- iii) When performing asbestos work at the work site, I will have this card available for display to an Occupational Health and Safety Officer if requested.

Worker Name:	Signature:	Date:
Photo ID (type):		
Card Issuer name:	Signature:	Date:

Contact Us

OHS Contact Centre

(Complaints, questions, reporting serious incidents)

Throughout Alberta

- 1-866-415-8690

Edmonton & surrounding area

- 780-415-8690

Deaf or hearing impaired

- 1-800-232-7215 (Alberta)
- 780-427-9999 (Edmonton)

Online Reporting Service

(PSIs, mine or mine site incidents)

psi.labour.alberta.ca

Website

alberta.ca/OHS

For more information

Asbestos Project Notification Form

alberta.ca/submit-asbestos-project-notification.aspx

Get Copies of *OHS Act*, Regulation and Code

Alberta Queen's Printer

qp.gov.ab.ca

Occupational Health and Safety

alberta.ca/ohs-act-regulation-code.aspx

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