



Vanuatu Infrastructure Reconstruction and Improvement Project (VIRIP)

Newsletter issue: September 2019



Asbestos board temporarily sealed prior to removal

Asbestos removal under VIRIP

VIRIP safeguards requirements include an Asbestos Protocol to ensure the safe removal and disposal of asbestos.

This newsletter outlines the progress to date.

Introduction

Some school and public buildings under VIRIP have been found to contain asbestos in some parts of the buildings.

These materials have been identified and are being removed under the VIRIP Asbestos Protocol. The Protocol ensures any project work with asbestos must be safe and not endanger health.

The story so far...

Starting in October 2017 a New Zealand expert Dale Austen, visited several schools and public buildings scheduled for works under VIRIP. Dale took samples and tested these for asbestos in a New Zealand laboratory. Although most samples proved negative (no asbestos detected) some tests did prove positive for asbestos meaning these had to be dealt with by the project under the Asbestos Protocol.

Rather than just remove the asbestos using overseas contractors (as has typically been the case up to now in Vanuatu), it was decided to use the expert's expertise (Dale is a fully certified assessor and supervisor) to build up experience and capacity in Vanuatu.

So the initial sampling was followed by a training course in November 2017 for a group of local participants. Fourteen participants were trained in asbestos hazard awareness and eight of these trainees, primarily builders and labourers from the private sector, went forward to receive further training in the supervision and safe removal of asbestos. The course participants successfully removed asbestos from two schools: Eton School on Efate where asbestos was removed from internal and external classroom walls and an internal wall at Eles School on Nguna. The expertise of the local builders meant that removed walls were restored immediately and the schools were able to continue classes immediately after restoration.

All the asbestos waste was carefully transported to a dedicated area at Bouffa Landfill, Etas.



Eton School -Trainees ready to start work



Eton School – Removal of asbestos boards



Eton School – The finished job

Since the initial course, a further training course for public service asset managers took place in May 2019 where “live” sampling took place at various sites in and around Port Vila as well as training and practice in how to organise sampling at large sites with multiple buildings.

The most recent training has been at the Public Prosecutor’s Office in Port Vila in September 2019 where, in addition to asbestos removal (the building soffits), trainees had the opportunity to work at heights on scaffolding, so further developing their range of skills. In this instance, the soffits were left open to allow a local contractor to undertake repairs and restoration.

The Way Ahead...

The current model of using a single overseas expert has worked well. This approach will continue over the project, in line with the VIRIP Asbestos Protocol.

In order to make the most of the learning and capacity building we are currently developing sets of training materials for use in Vanuatu. These training

materials will cover all stages of asbestos, from initial sampling through safe removal and final disposal.

It is intended to share the experiences and successes of the approach developed under VIRIP in Vanuatu with the Vanuatu Department of Labour and Chamber of Commerce.

There are also plans to share the Vanuatu experience more widely so our Pacific neighbours can also benefit from what we have learned through VIRIP.



Wrapped and ready for disposal!

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