



# ASBESTOS IN SOIL

A pan european perspective



# ASBESTOS IN SOIL

A pan european perspective



**NICOLE**

Network for Industrially Co-ordinated Sustainable Land Management in Europe

# ASBESTOS IN SOIL - A PAN EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE

## Foreword

There are common themes and good practice running throughout Europe with respect to the management of asbestos in soil, although many variations in approach exist.

As with other contaminants, the assessment and management of asbestos risks should follow a risk based assessment approach (source-pathway-receptor analysis) with selection of appropriate remediation following a suitable remedial options appraisal.

However, many decisions regarding the remediation and management of asbestos in soils are based on stakeholder perception and a subjective or emotive response (i.e. hazard based rather than risk-based).

As demonstrated in this report there are few European countries with clear standards and detailed guidance. This document provides an overview of best practice in the industry with a pan European perspective and with some case studies to illustrate typical responses to asbestos in soils impacts.

© NICOLE 2021

# Contents

---

1	Introduction	p. 7	10	Risk Based Soil Guidelines	p.29
2	NICOLE Survey of Members	p.10	11	Approaches to Risk Management	p.30
3	Legislative and Regulatory Positions	p.11	12	Research and Innovation	p.32
4	Industry Good Practice	p.13	13	Remediation Options · Case Study Innovative Screening and Reuse on site	p.35 p. 39
5	Approaches to Ground Investigation	p.15	14	Sustainable Remediation · Case study Sustainable Materials Management	p.46 p. 49
6	Detecting Asbestos in Soil	p.17	15	Opportunities for Harmonisation	p.53
7	Laboratory Methods	p.19	16	Concluding Remarks	p.54
8	Waste Classification, Handling and Disposal	p.21			
9	Approaches to Risk Assessment · Case study Air monitoring key	p.23 p. 25			



**CAUTION**

**BURIED ASBESTOS**

DO NOT DISTURB THIS AREA  
WITHOUT PRIOR APPROVAL

Asbestos warning sign | AECOM

# 1 Introduction

Asbestos is a common and challenging contaminant in soil; a legacy of widespread historic use in buildings and poor historic control of construction waste, building demolition, and re-use of crushed demolition aggregate as made ground.

Hazard, risk perception and acceptance can vary widely amongst stakeholders and the management of asbestos in soil can vary widely as a result.

Differing stakeholder positions on risk acceptance or risk avoidance (zero tolerance) can have a significant impact on project designs, programmes, and costs, and there is little harmonisation in approach across Europe.

Asbestos in soils is increasingly recognised by those involved in the management of brownfield



Degraded asbestos debris in soil | AECOM



Visual detection of asbestos during remediation | NTP

land regeneration as a potentially high-cost, risk-driven issue, and this publication seeks to: provide a pan-European perspective; identifying opportunities for harmonisation; improve awareness and understanding; and promote greater consistency.

The content of this publication reflects the work of the NICOLE Asbestos Working Group from 2017 to 2021.

The aims of the NICOLE Working Group were to: Compare and contrast current industry approaches, regulatory positions and quality and availability of existing guidance in European Countries as an initial “baselining” exercise to help identify significant differences and opportunities for harmonisation.



Improve awareness and understanding in managing the risks of asbestos in soil (considering its occurrence both on its own and as a co-contaminant with other pollutants) by advocating a pragmatic approach and promoting greater consistency where possible.

These aims were to be achieved by:

1. Collating information on, and benchmarking of, current methods, standards and guidance for the characterisation, risk assessment, remediation and regulation of asbestos in soils that are currently adopted by industry and regulators in European Countries;
2. Identifying how asbestos contaminated soils (including those also contaminated with other pollutants) are currently remediated in different countries, considering different

treatment technologies and the availability (or otherwise) of appropriate disposal/ treatment facilities;

3. Identify existing research efforts into characterisation, risk assessment and remediation, and identify research opportunities that could support a sustainable pragmatic approach; and
4. Identifying case studies that support and improve confidence in risk management decisions and in developing best practice.

## 2 NICOLE Survey of Members

To establish a baseline of current legislation, guidance and practice in European countries, a detailed survey was issued to NICOLE and Common Forum members in 2018. Three years on and very little has changed. The survey comprised 70 questions covering 6 topic areas.

These were:

1. Legislative provision and regulatory position
2. Good practice industry guidance
3. Laboratory methods
4. Waste classification, handling and disposal
5. Remediation options
6. Research and innovation

12 responses were received for 6 countries.

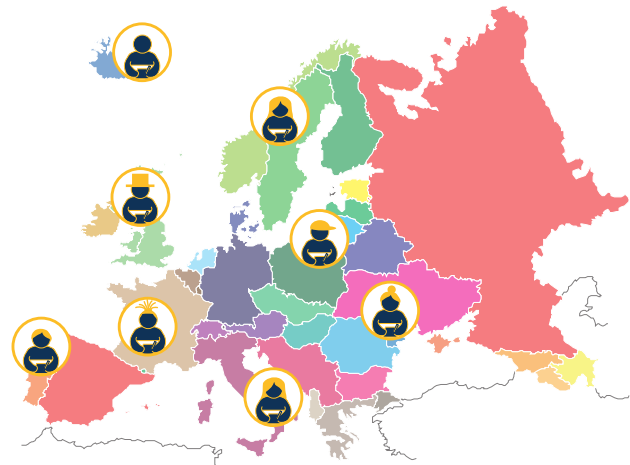


Figure 2.1 NICOLE Network Survey of members

### 3 Legislative and Regulatory Positions

One potential harmonising factor is EU Directive 2009/148/EC, on the protection of workers from the risks related to exposure to asbestos at work, that sets out occupational health and safety requirements for work involving asbestos. However, even with this in place, the control limits for asbestos in air vary considerably across Europe, ranging from the Directive Control Limit of 0.1f/ml in the UK to 0.002f/ml in The Netherlands (50x lower). No country has specific legal provision solely addressing exposure to as-



Asbestos cement fragments in soil | AECOM

bestos in soil, although it is increasingly recognised that disturbance of asbestos containing soil is an activity that is captured by existing asbestos-specific occupational regulations relating to work in buildings (e.g. maintenance, refurbishment and demolition).

Country	Occupational exposure limit (f/ml 8hr TWA)
EU limit value (2009/148/EC)	0.1 (100,000f/m <sup>3</sup> )
UK	0.1
France	0.01
Italy	0.01
Germany	0.001
Netherlands	0.002 (with intention to reduce to 0.0003)

Table 3.1 Occupational exposure limit

**Presence of AiS guidance.** Detailed sampling and testing protocols. Air and soil guidelines. Regular testing

**Absence of AiS guidance.** Reliance on OSH and waste regulations. No regular testing

There is a stark divergence between those countries with detailed regulatory guidance on the risk management of asbestos in soil and those countries with no specific regulatory guidance for asbestos in soil. It was discussed at the NICOLE workshop in Warsaw in November 2019 that asbestos is considered to be an emerging soil contaminant in Germany, and in many Eastern European countries, even though in other countries it has been recognised as a contaminant of concern for decades. Where detailed guidance is in place, it is largely based on

the research of RIVM and TNO published between 2003-2008.

The only European regulatory guidance levels for asbestos in soil are those published by the Dutch, Belgian and Italian authorities. The Dutch and Belgian authorities adopt a Tiered approach and use the same Tier 1 value, but importantly use different definitions for those values.

Dutch Tier 1  
Intervention value  
= 100mg/kg (sum  
of chrysotile+10x  
amphibole as  
measured by NEN  
5707)

Flanders Tier 1  
Intervention value  
= 100mg/kg (sum  
of fixed + x10 loose  
fibres (all asbestos  
types) as measured  
by TEM)

## 4 Industry Good Practice

It is only common among a small number of European Countries to test made ground soil samples for asbestos as part of a normal site investigation. Sampling is either carried out using typical practice adopted for contaminated land or using detailed prescriptive practice specific to asbestos (such as for the Netherlands and Belgium). Guidance on sampling strategies, sample plans, laboratory test methods, and requirements for site staff competency/qualifications is mixed, with no common approach across the countries surveyed.

When suspected asbestos is observed in the soil there is a legal requirement under workplace regulations to put in place procedures to manage the associated risks. If suspected asbestos is found onsite during site investigation or remediation works, the general procedure is to stop work, make

the work area safe and temporarily vacate the area until the risk assessment and method statements for the work can be revised. Actions can include the use of dust suppression, asbestos survey of the area, confirmatory laboratory testing of the identified material, and use of Licensed contractors to remove the asbestos. Work should only ever continue if safe methods of work can be put in place.



Signing of an asbestos impacted area | NTP



Guidance Questions	Belgium (Flanders)	Belgium (Wallonia)	France	Italy	Portugal	Spain	UK
Is the testing of brownfield sites for asbestos commonplace?	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	not	yes
Is guidance available for the risk management of asbestos in soil?	yes	yes	yes	no	no	no	yes
Does the guidance fill a gap in regulatory guidance?	yes	no	yes	no	no	no	yes
Is the guidance entirely country specific?	no	no	yes	yes	no	no	yes
Does the guidance advocate a tiered approach?	yes	no	no	no	no	no	yes
Does guidance include method on soil sampling if asbestos is present?	yes	yes	no	yes	no	no	yes
Does the guidance recommend air testing during site-based activities?	no	no	yes	yes	yes	no	yes
Does the guidance advocate health and safety precautions during sitebased activities?	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Does the guidance advocate a guideline for asbestos in soil?	yes	yes	no	no	no	no	no
Is there any guidance on how to assess risk from asbestos fibres being present in water?	no	no	no	no	no	no	no

Table 4.1 Summary of questionnaire responses on good practice guidance

## 5 Approaches to Ground Investigation

Some of the specific aspects of ground investigation identified in the survey included:

The importance of desk study and site walkover to establish the likelihood of asbestos being present. Sampling strategies – can be targeted or random/systematic.

Sampling approach – size and frequency. Dutch, Belgian, and SoBRA guidance require/advocate the use of much larger sample sizes that typically used for other soil contaminants. The Dutch and Belgian guidance also specify sample frequency, e.g. 1 sample per 50 m<sup>3</sup> or 1 per 1000 m<sup>2</sup>.

Activity based sampling is occasionally used. This is in essence what the RIVM/TNO guidance was based on, what is described in US EPA guidance,



Asbestos sampling activities in Belgium | AECOM

and what is advocated in SoBRA guidance to better understand the likelihood of asbestos fibres becoming airborne as a result of soil disturbance.

Other ground condition factors are important to risk, including soil type, vegetation or other surface cover, and moisture content.



Asbestos sampling activities in Belgium | AECOM

Differing views exist as to whether ground investigation falls under occupational regulations for work with asbestos (as per in buildings).

Requirement for suitably trained/experienced staff. For example, Dutch guidance requires specific certification and accreditation for inspection and sampling of soils.

Asbestos was found to be present in up to 20% of made ground samples according to SoBRA research in the UK based on 150,000 soil samples submitted to UK laboratories between 2015 and 2018.

## 6 Detecting asbestos in soil

Asbestos sampling activity in UK | AECOM



The conceptual understanding of the spatial distribution of asbestos is fundamental to the design of an investigation and the interpretation of the results. Is it a delineable area subject to asbestos disposal? Is it dispersed fragments across a wide area? What is the likelihood of detecting the asbestos using your sampling strategy?

Grid Size	Probability of detecting one ACM fragment	Sample size as a proportion of grid square
100	1 in 100,000	0.01%
50	1 in 10,000	0.04%
10	1 in 1000	1%

Table 6.1 Probability of detecting asbestos based on a soil sample size of 1 litre

The reliability of the site investigation is a function of:

- Sample size
- Sample density

As noted previously the Dutch and Belgian authorities, and SoBRA in the UK, advocate taking larger samples for asbestos compared to typical size of soil samples taken for other contaminant testing because of the greater uncertainties involved in sampling for asbestos in soil.

The theoretical probability of detecting a small area of isolated asbestos fragments in soil can be extremely low. If random fragments are found in soil the probability of more unidentified fragments being present in the soil can be high.

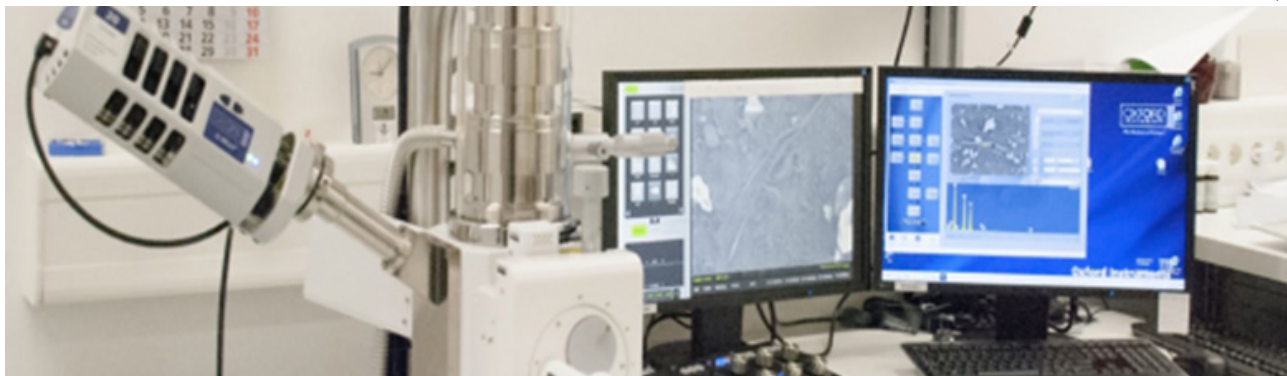


Samples taken in The Netherlands | NTP



## 7 Laboratory Methods

Electron microscope



Laboratory methods vary widely across Europe. Some countries have very detailed analytical methods that are embedded in the regulatory guidance (for example the Netherlands and NEN Standard 5707). Other countries such as the UK have a mixture of methods published by regulatory bodies (HSE for HSG248) and industry bodies (SCA Blue Book Method\*).

Current European Standards specifically for quantifying asbestos in soil include: NEN 5707 (The Netherlands) SCA Blue Book Method (UK)\*

*\* Withdrawn in October 2020 due to concerns over validation triggered by AISS results*

The methods that are available vary depending on the regulatory context and purpose of the test.

The three most common purposes are:

1. Bulk analysis for the presence of asbestos (driven by occupational regulation)
2. Air monitoring (also driven by occupational regulation)
3. Gravimetric quantification for waste classification

The reliability of laboratory test methods can be better understood by studying the inter-laboratory proficiency schemes, such as those provided by the UK Health & Safety Laboratory schemes (including AISS) [\[link\]](#)

Detailed standards for quantification in soil are the least common and also tend to have the greatest variability. When a single standard method is not mandated by regulation, interlaboratory variability can be high. Each laboratory undertaking the often multi-stage analytical process slightly differently—be it in the sample preparation, the mass of sub-sample analysed, the magnification of the microscope used, the type of microscopic method (PLM, PCOM, SEM, TEM), the assumed composition of man-made asbestos products, or the fibre counting rules employed.

## 8 Waste Classification, Handling and Disposal

The classification, handling and disposal of asbestos and soil impacted asbestos waste is addressed by the EU Waste Framework Directive (2008/98/EC) and is potentially the most harmonised aspect of dealing with asbestos in soil across Europe as a result.

All European countries adopt the 0.1% hazardous waste threshold.

Soil that contains identifiable pieces of asbestos containing material (i.e. any particle of a size that can be identified as potentially being asbestos by a competent person if examined by the naked eye), then the soil is regarded as hazardous waste.

Collection of asbestos fragments should be done using double bagged, be labelled asbestos waste,



Double bagging of asbestos waste in UK | Ramboll



Double bagging of asbestos waste in UK | Ramboll

and shipped using the correct waste transfer documentation.

Large asbestos sheets can be wrapped in 1000 gauge polythene sheeting, labelled as above and placed in an enclosed and locked skip.

The transport of asbestos impacted soils can be either in enclosed containers or in sheeted lorries by a licensed waste carrier.

It is important to note that in accordance with the waste hierarchy, the volume of hazardous waste should be reduced by physical separation of visible asbestos from residual soils (if feasible).

## 9 Approaches to Risk Assessment

Motor-powered breathing system | NTP



The most established approaches to risk assessment for asbestos in soil in Europe are the frameworks developed by VROM (now IenW) and OVAM, and with the latter OVAM framework being highly influenced by the earlier VROM framework. Further steps to better understand the potential fibre release of asbestos from the affected land are in-

troduced by the US EPA framework that advocates activity-based sampling, and UK good practice that advocates the better understanding of dust and asbestos fibre release from soil disturbance.

Published research on which the frameworks are based is limited, and dated—the research that



forms the basis of the VROM framework dates from the 1990s, and a core piece of research advocated in the UK guidance dates from the 1980s.

vary (see section on Ground Investigation), there is a common theme to the frameworks that is illustrated in the diagram below.

Whilst individual frameworks vary in the detail, and the data requirements for those frameworks


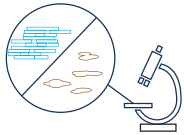

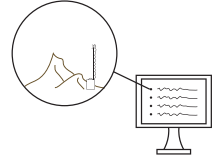
Tier	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3	Tier 4
Data	Basic soil characterisation 	Differentiation in asbestos form and type 	Respirable fibre content in soil. Particle size fraction of interest 	Site-specific fibre-release data 
Criteria	Generic assessment criteria (not asbestos type specific)	Generic assessment criteria for asbestos types and/or forms	Generic assessment criteria for respirable fibre content	Site-specific assessment criteria

Figure 9.1 Common theme in frameworks

Hobmoor School – Birmingham, UK | Google Maps



**Ramboll was commissioned by Balfour Beatty Construction Limited to develop and implement an asbestos remediation strategy to enable the construction of a new school.**

Previously developed as industrial land, the historic review and site visit established significant volumes of demolition rubble from prefabricated buildings across the site. The proposed development included landscaping, sports areas and

Frequently occurring fragments of asbestos cement and AIB were discovered



Asbestos finds | Ramboll

earthworks reprofiling. This meant significant cut and fill works across the site with soil containing demolition rubble.

Asbestos Containing Material (ACM) was encountered during site clearance, so a specialist survey contractor was commissioned for soil sampling and perimeter air monitoring. The asbestos detected in this survey was asbestos cement (chrysotile), asbestos insulation board (amosite) and found in the topsoil till a depth of 1,00-1,50 meters. The pollutant linkages identified during construction and operation were potential exposure to free fibres from friable materials from the asbestos cement and insulation board.

The remedial options appraisal included:

- Dig contaminated soil and dump on site in

vegetation strip; costs over £800 000,

- Hand pick asbestos material, capping with imported top soil (0,3 meters) and install a marker layer between clean top soil and contaminated soil underneath; costs approximately £500 000,
- Assess the risks of in situ reusing the top soil.

Pockets of asbestos covered much of the site at depths up to 5m.



Asbestos finds—hand picking | Ramboll



Processing plant | Ramboll

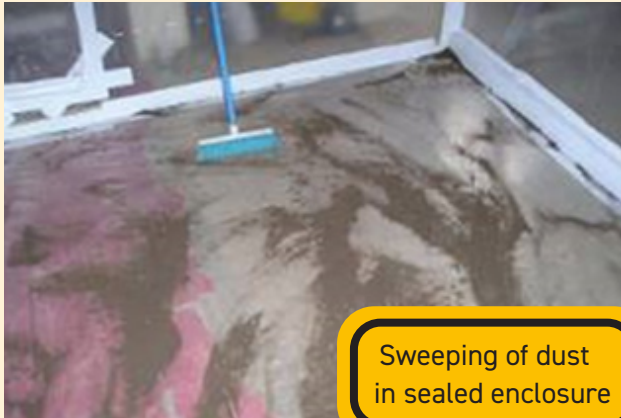
Based on the options appraisal a bespoke methodology was developed and a comprehensive worldwide review of asbestos legislation and guidelines was undertaken. The final remediation strategy designed comprised of:

1. Hand picking of asbestos cement and asbestos insulation board fragments,
2. Trommel sieving of soil on a 14 mm mesh,

3. Air monitoring for fibres across the perimeter of the site and in the "Control Zone",
4. Works carried out by a licensed contractor with a HSE approved asbestos methodology.

A dust and fibre release experiment was designed to estimate the potential fibre release during school operation, which could be released by soil derived indoor dust. This was done by simulating a realistic and real time situation. For this a 12 m<sup>3</sup> sealed enclosure was built into the school with an air lock entry. The soil in the sealed enclosure was vigorously disturbed to generate dust. The indoor air was monitored and sampled. The samples were tested with Phase Contrast Optical Microscopy (PCOM) analyses.

The remediation delivered a screened top soil which was suitable for re-use in the landscape area



Indoor air experiment | Ramboll

without requirement of a cover layer. The worst case activities were simulated and tested and concluded no residual fibres and low residual risks. All air monitoring results were below detection limit of the standard HSE method i.e.  $<0.01$  f/ml during the earthworks. And the air testing experiment (sam-

ples repeatedly disturbed) did not generate airborne fibre concentrations above limit of detection of the standard HSE method ( $<0.01$  f/ml).

The new school is in place and the landscaping offers a nice area around it.



Before and after construction | Ramboll



## 10 Risk-Based Soil Guidelines

There are few published guideline values for asbestos in soil in Europe. Those that are published are summarised below:

Country/ Region	Guideline Value	Additional Information
The Netherlands	Tier 1: 100mg/kg Tier 2: 1000mg/kg (non-friable) or 100mg/kg friable Tier 3: 10mg/kg respirable fibres	Soil Remediation Circular 2013 Annex 3. Concentrations defined as the sum of chrysotile + x10 amphibole and as the average dry weight concentration over a maximum spatial unit of 1000m <sup>2</sup> . Samples to be taken and analysed as per SIKB Protocol 2018 and NEN 5707.
Italy	1000mg/kg	D.Lgs 152/06. Analysis required to be either SEM for asbestos content <1% or DRX/FTIR for asbestos contents >1%.
Belgium/ Flanders	100mg/kg	Phase 1—minimum of two 10 litre sieved soil samples per 1000m <sup>2</sup> of unpaved ground. If concentration < 100mg/kg or >70cm bgl, no action required. If >100mg/kg, further site-specific inspection (Phase 2) required. Concentrations defined as the sum of fixed fibres + x10 loose fibres.
Belgium/ Wallonia	100mg/kg	Concentrations defined as the sum of bonded fibres + x10 unbound fibres. If concentration is > 100mg/kg but <500mg/kg it is acceptable to use soil beneath 1m clean soil + geotextile.
Belgium/ Brussels	100mg/kg Intervention Value 80mg/kg Remediation Value	If the results obtained for a sample exceed the intervention standard for asbestos or if there is a question of pollution (in the sense of art. 3 25° of the Soil Ordinance), a detailed soil survey must be carried out.

Table 10.1 Published guidelines in Europe

# 11 Approaches to Risk Management

---

Risk perception and stakeholder acceptance of a risk-based approach to asbestos is potentially a far stronger driver of intervention than for many other soil contaminants. Zero tolerance or an abundance of caution towards asbestos can drive remediation towards “non-detect” solutions.

There are well established risk assessment decision frameworks available, for example the Australian, US EPA, Dutch, and Belgian approaches. What is not well understood is how often those frameworks are used past “Tier 1”.

Is the challenge to prove the worth of the more detailed risk assessment Tiers? Is the scientific evidence sufficient to be able to persuade stakeholders that the risk is acceptable? Does the retention of asbestos-containing soils on-site leave

constraints on land-use that is not cost-beneficial? Detailed risk assessment has its place and can be valuable in situations where it is not possible and not sustainable to remove the asbestos entirely. This is illustrated in the decision flowchart on the next page.

The difference in the prescriptive nature and detail of frameworks for individual countries and the sustainability of the output from those frameworks is worth further consideration.

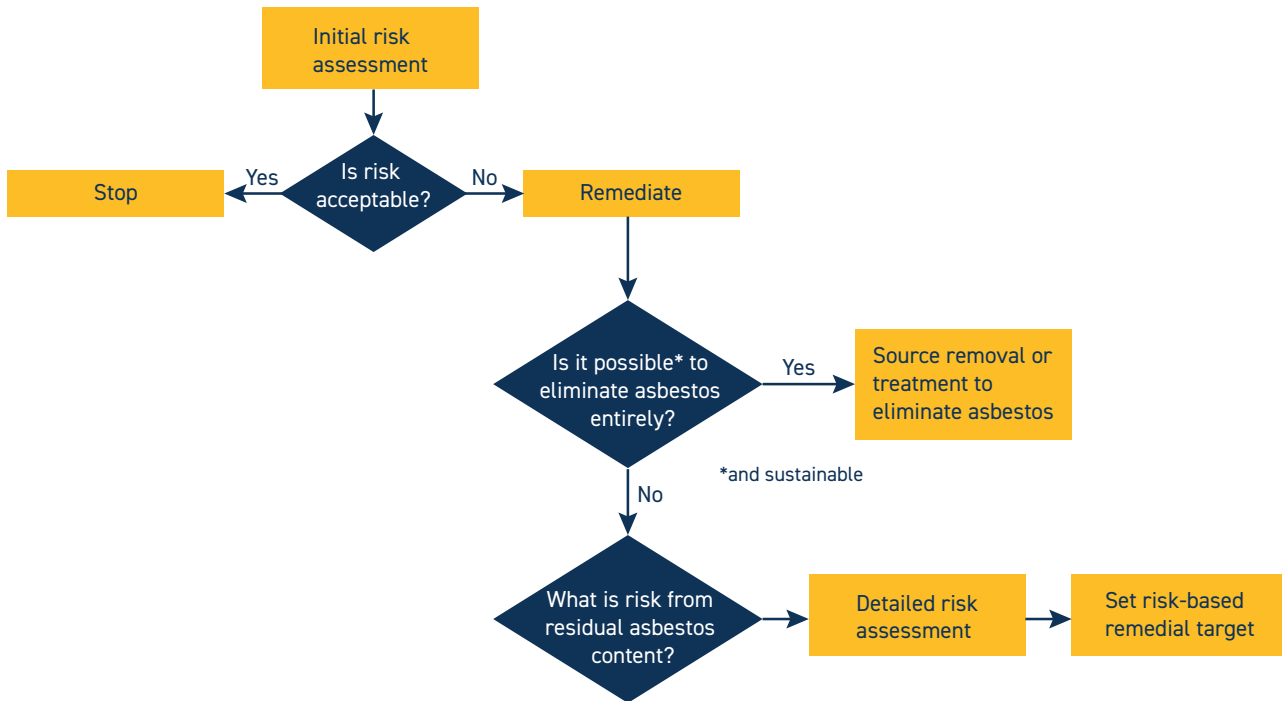


Figure 11.1 Approaches to Risk Management

## 12 Research and Innovation

---

Little innovation was specifically identified by the respondents to the questionnaire. A literature review of the most recent developments (within a 5 year time window) in the fields of analytical methodologies, remediation technologies and survey studies has been carried out for NICOLE through the analysis of scientific publications hosted at all the Web of Science databases [\[Link\]](#).

Asbestos investigations have historically focused on commercial asbestos fibers, which were commonly defined in regulations as chrysotile, crocidolite, amosite, tremolite, actinolite, and anthophyllite. Investigations now include other types of elongate mineral particles such as winchite and richterite (van Orden, 2018).

The most common analytical methods for asbestos analysis are polarised light microscopy (PLM),

phase contract optical microscopy (PCOM) and electron microscopy (either scanning (SEM) or transmission (TEM)).

Cossio et al (2018) improved the sensitivity and precision and enhanced the productivity of a Scanning Electron Microscopy with Energy Dispersive Spectrometry (SEMEDS) methodology for the analysis of asbestos in a natural confining matrix and also with a very low asbestos content.

Wroble et al (2017) compared different soil sampling and analytical methods for asbestos quantification in order develop a toolbox for better assessment in order to overcome the difficulties that exist in the detection of asbestos at low concentrations and its correspondent extrapolation from soil concentrations to air concentra-

tions. Sampling was performed using two distinct methods: traditional discrete (“grab”) and incremental sampling methodology (ISM). Analysis was carried out using PLM, TEM and a combination of these two methods were used. Using a Fluidized Bed Asbestos Segregator (FBAS) followed by TEM analysis resulted in the detection of asbestos at locations that were not detected using other analytical methods.

Fibre counting by automated image analysis using fluorescence microscopy has been evaluated by Alexandrov et al (2015). There is the potential from this for faster analysis and less human error, but whilst good validation for medium to high fibre concentrations was achieved, for lower fibre concentrations it was less accurate.

In the last 5 years just a few articles mentioned innovative or upgraded technologies for the asbestos treatment in contaminated sites, mostly considering biological treatment.

Mohanty et al. (2018) examined whether environmentally relevant concentrations of siderophores (exudates from bacteria and fungi that facilitate iron mobilisation and uptake) could alter chrysotile toxicity. Iron removal by siderophores decreased the carcinogenicity of the fibres, the fungal exudates being more effective than those from the bacteria. However, the authors stated that this approach should be more deeply explored in order to develop a viable strategy to manage asbestos-contaminated sites. Native bacteria and fungi from asbestos mines in India (*Aspergillus tubingensis* and *Coemansia reverse*) have

also reportedly been used to detoxify asbestos (Bhattacharya et al. 2015 & 2016).

Gonneau et al. (2017) evaluated the capacity of crop cultivar and grasses for the phytoremediation of soils containing asbestos from natural and anthropogenic causes. The presence of asbestos caused less or no impact on the plant growth when compared to other factors such as the presence of heavy metals or lack of nutrients.

Valouma et al. (2016) used a combined treatment of oxalic acid dihydrate with silicates (tetraethoxysilane and pure water glass (potassium silicate)) to achieve total destruction of chrysotile. Oxalic acid leaching followed by the tetraethoxysilane addition was more appropriate for cases of glushinskite recovery; while an Oxalic acid leaching followed by water glass ma-

naged to encapsulate the asbestos fibers, which might be a valid option for onsite asbestos detoxification.

A small number of commercial companies have developed innovative solutions to asbestos remediation:

- An Italian company offers an innovative remediation technology that uses microwave energy to convert asbestos waste to an inert material. The technology involves a movable reactor that can heat the asbestos and produce a reusable inert material [\[Link\]](#).
- A Japanese company Sagasaki offers 'ND Lock', a solidification solution based on calcium polysulphide (CaSx) formulation. The treatment involves a crystallization and decomposition process. Numerous applications relating to asbestos treatment are given on their website.



## 13 Remediation Options

The most common remediation approach in many countries is still to “dig and dump” (i.e. excavate and dispose to an off-site landfill). A question is whether this is a sustainable approach? The risk is removed by removing the hazard (i.e. the source) but does the context of site use permit a lower impact solution?

The trigger for remediation is also different between countries. For example, mandatory testing for microscopic fibres in soil whenever a construction activity takes place versus action only if visible asbestos waste is encountered. In France, all road asphalt has to be tested for the presence of asbestos as part of any road improvement scheme.

From the questionnaire responses it is clear that there is substantial variation in remediation



Typical remediation earthworks activities in UK | AECOM

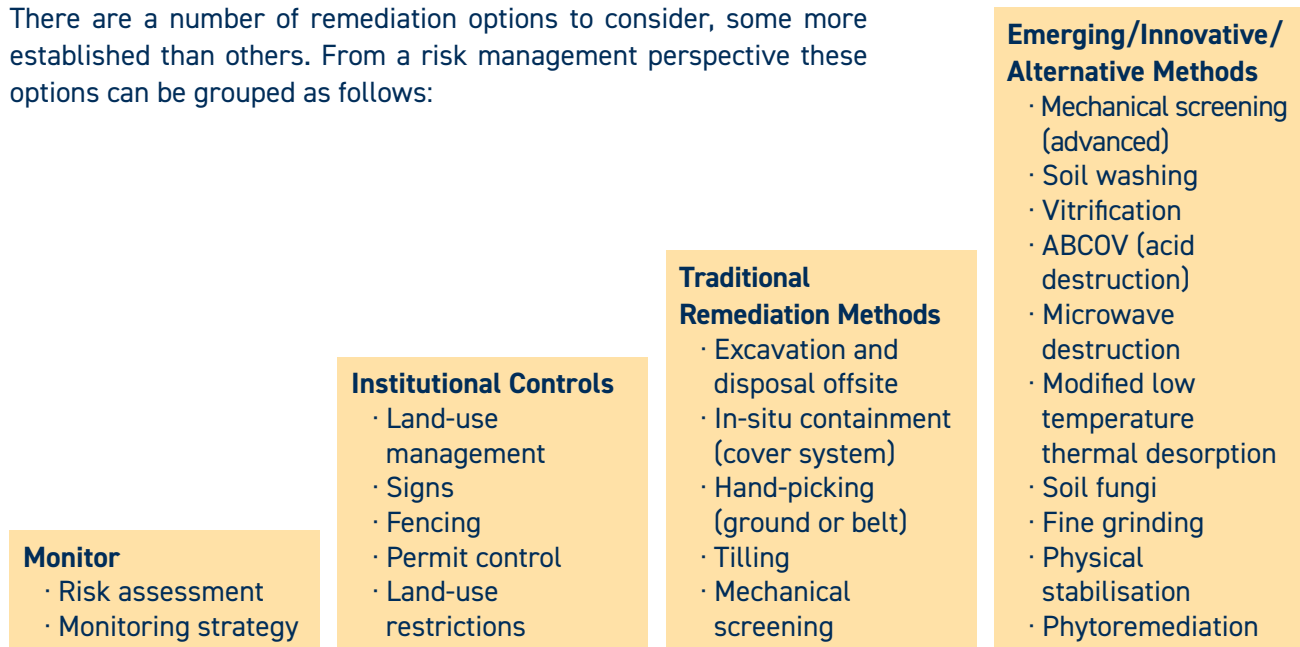


Damping down of stockpiled material with water spray | AECOM

triggers, in what restrictions and requirements the identified presence of asbestos introduces, and in the remediation standards enforced. Even if the value of the remediation standard appears at face value to be the same (for example for The Netherlands and Belgium), the detailed definition of that value is different.

What is generally recognised in the questionnaire responses is that the presence of asbestos in the ground can have a significant effect on land use and costs for remediation (either in the cost for remediating the asbestos itself as a risk and remediation driver, or in the additional cost for remediating a different risk driving contaminant because of the co-presence of asbestos).

There are a number of remediation options to consider, some more established than others. From a risk management perspective these options can be grouped as follows:



The following scheme (next page) presents the risk management based considerations for the remedial options.

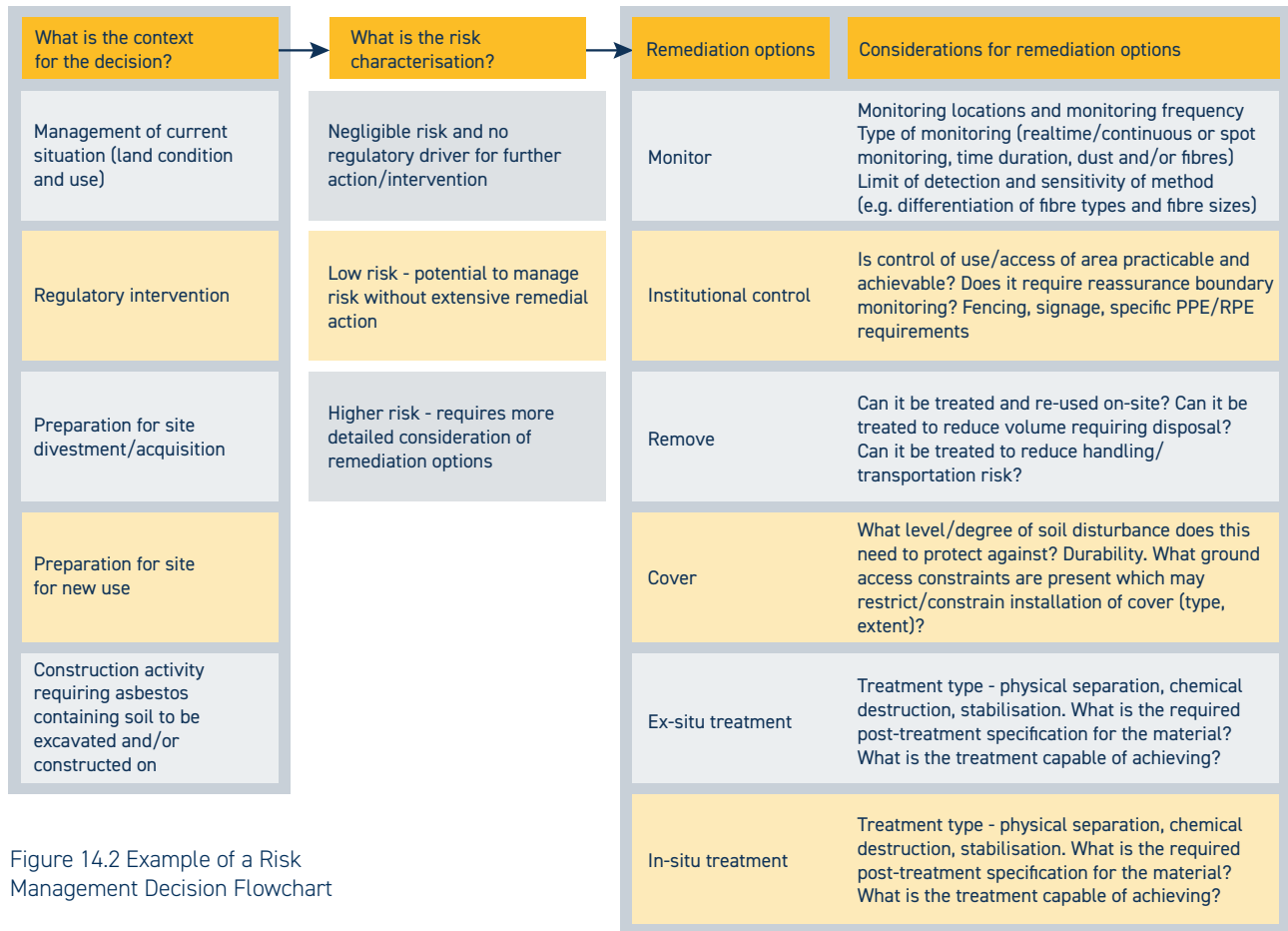


Figure 14.2 Example of a Risk Management Decision Flowchart

**John F Hunt demolished and remediated this former 44-acre foundry / iron works site in Ipswich. The mixed-use site also held two historic landfills containing inert and 'difficult' waste.**

Part of the works involved the management of 35,000 m<sup>3</sup> of previously unidentified fibrous asbestos in soil. This unforeseen event had not been budgeted for and could have potentially rendered the project unviable. John F Hunt worked quickly and pragmatically with the client's consultants and regulators to agree a solution to enable the re-use of materials on site, making the necessary adjustments to the remedial design and Materials Management Plan.

An innovative process engineered approach of complex sorting and cement stabilisation of the



Futura Business Park – Ipswich, UK | John F Hunt

All forms of asbestos were discovered including crocidolite lagging.



Pockets of asbestos covered much of the site at depths up to 5m.

Asbestos finds | John F Hunt

soil was agreed with the regulators to derive site won engineered fill that was suitable for use.

Due to the nature of the asbestos, the remediation works were undertaken as Licensed Asbestos Works managed by John F Hunt.

Contaminated soil was fed into a three-way screener. The oversize material off the screener was proven to be suitable for re-use. The mid-size component was passed to an 'asbestos picking station' where six operatives hand removed visible asbestos products; in some instance the material was passed though the picking station twice to ensure the re-use criteria of <math><0.1\%</math> asbestos (w/w) was achieved. Fine material coming off the screener was passed to a mill unit where



2% cement was added. The stabilised fines were fed onto a stacking conveyor with misting sprays that deposited the material directly into the excavation.

Throughout the works the air was monitored by an independent Asbestos Analyst to demonstrate that the control measures were suitable.

The processed soil was tested to show compliance with the Remediation Strategy, following which it was placed and compacted to form a development platform 1.5m below the finished site level.

John F Hunt were able to successfully treat 65,000 tonnes of asbestos contaminated soil using innovative techniques that ultimately saved the client over £10,000,000 in disposal costs.



Processing plant | John F Hunt

A number of innovations in remediation have either been proposed and/or implemented by remediation specialists, as exemplified in some of the case studies included in this document and the listing of potential options on page 37. Innovation does not have to be a completely new technology, and can include the innovative use of an existing technology.

Examples of this include the use of:

- Cement impregnated geotextiles for cover systems (see photographs to the right)
- Low temperature driers or thermal desorption units to extract loose fibres by drying + extraction of airborne fibres
- Mechanical screening (dry and/or wet)



Installation of surface barrier geotextile | Curtis Barrier Intl

A comprehensive review of remediation technologies is provided in a report by Bureau KLB for the Dutch Ministry for Infrastructure and Water Management published in 2018. This was driven by the need to reduce the unsustainable volume of asbestos contaminated soils being disposed to landfill in the Netherlands.



Mechanical screening of excavated soil | AECOM

Remedial objectives can shape option choices. For example:

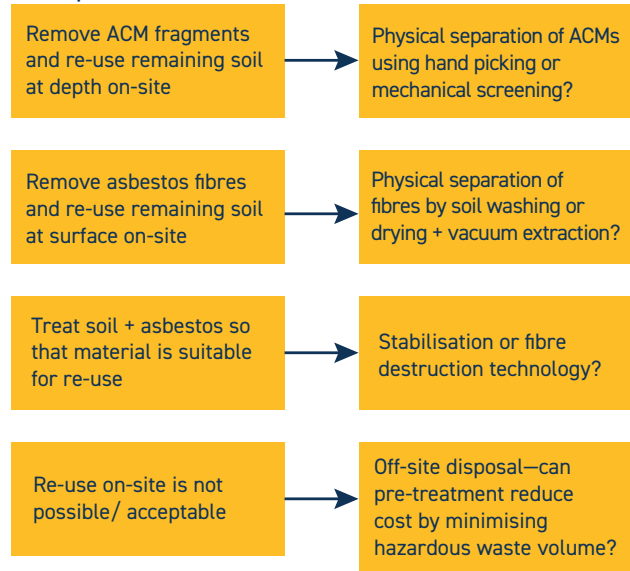


Figure 13.1 Examples of choices for different Remedial objectives

Factors to consider in remedial selection can include:

- Types of asbestos present
- Levels of asbestos present
- Area / volume of impacted soil
- Timescales
- Client risk perception / avoid land blight
- Sustainability
- Presence of other contamination
- Current and/or proposed land-use
- Site location (and proximity to receptors)
- Occupational health constraints
- Remediation standard required
- Other requirements for soil (e.g. geotechnical)



Removing asbestos contaminated soil | NTP

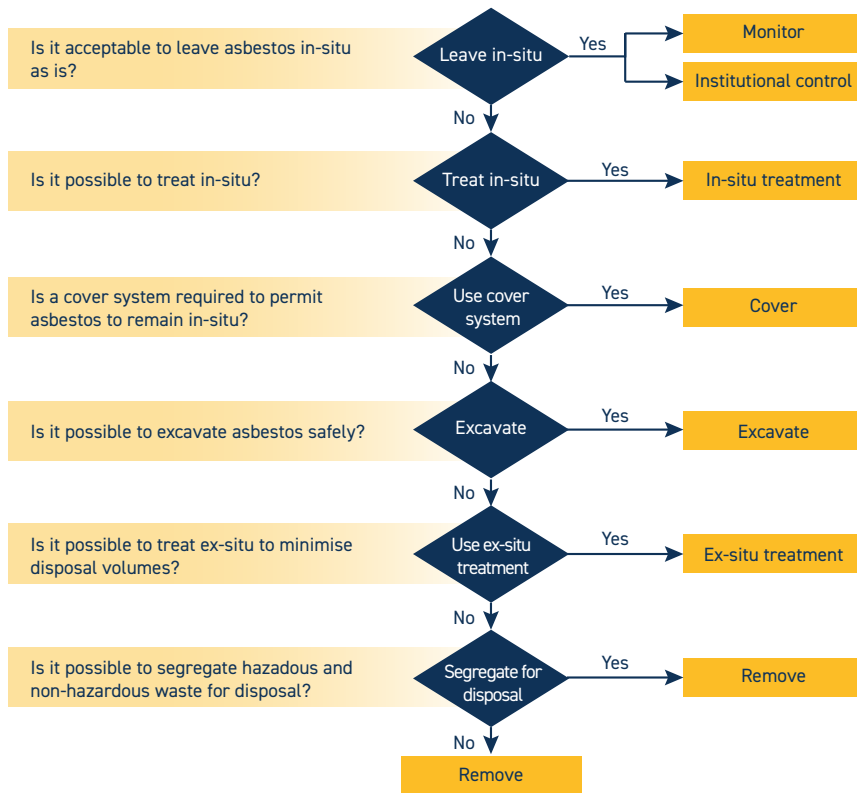


Figure 13.2 Example of a Remediation Decision Flowchart

## 14 Sustainable Remediation

Trommel screening of excavated soil | McAuliffe



Asbestos in soil remediation options should be considered in accordance with sustainable remediation frameworks (e.g. SuRF). Does the remediation approach represent the best solution when considering environmental, economic and social factors as agreed with stakeholders? How can successful remediation best be achieved with

minimal environmental impact? What remedial solution delivers the greatest cost-benefit? Does the selected approach transfer impacts to future generations?

A simple example is the consideration of on-site physical separation to maximise the re-use of





Belt-picking station | McAuliffe



Hand picking of asbestos fragments on a belt | McAuliffe

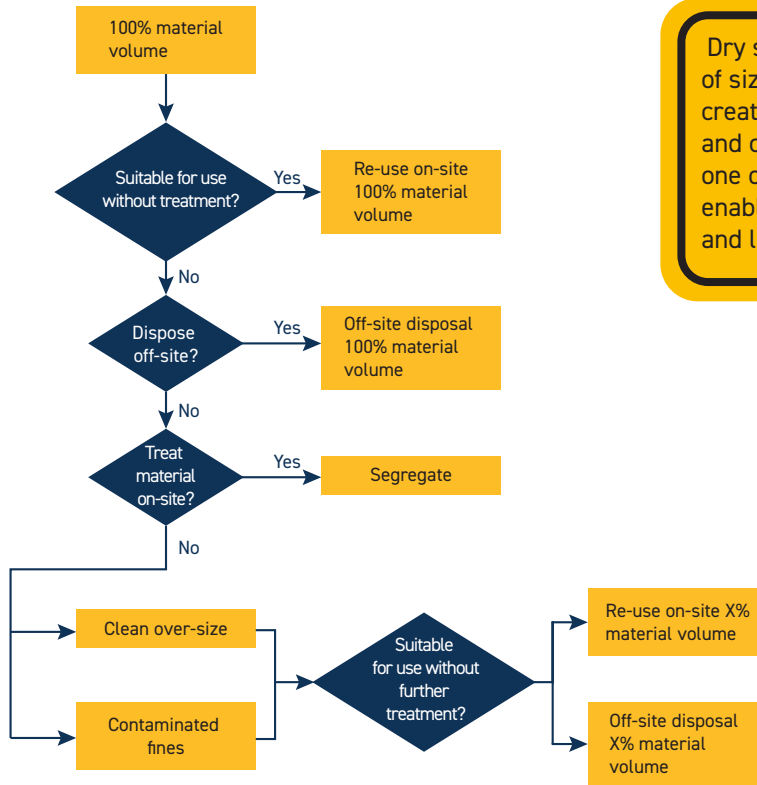
material on-site and minimise off-site waste disposal. One way of viewing this is via a decision flowchart such as the examples on the following pages which illustrate the decision process and disposal volume reduction created by the adoption of mechanical separation treatment techniques. The use and sequencing of the material screening techniques will be influenced by a number of factors including:

- Cost of treatment versus cost of disposal
- Particle size distribution of material
- Remediation standard

Hazardous waste volume



Volume re-used



Dry screening and separation of size fractions could create clean size-fractions and concentrate asbestos in one or more size fractions, enabling re-use of some material and lowering disposal volumes

Figure 14.1 An example of a treatment decision process for dry screening as a sustainable option

### **AECOM developed a remediation and excavated materials management strategy for the redevelopment of a former car part manufacturing facility located in the UK.**

The presence of soil contaminants necessitated a remediation and earthworks strategy that had sustainability at its core: maximising reuse of site-won material, and minimising off-site disposal whilst at the same time providing a safe development platform. The remediation strategy sought to first treat organic-based contamination through ex-situ bioremediation. Alongside the remediation works, an excavated materials management plan (MMP) was developed under the CL:AIRE Definition of Waste: Development Industry Code of Practice (Code of Practice) to support the earthworks design. Demolition of the former buildings and hard standing oc-

curred alongside the soil remediation under separate contract by a third party. Four stockpiles of screened demolition materials (approx. 26,500 m<sup>3</sup>) were prepared for re-use. However, these materials were subsequently found to contain a proportion of asbestos containing materials (ACM) which had in places also contaminated the ground as the stockpiles had been moved around by the contractor.



Fragment of asbestos lagging encountered

Asbestos finds | AECOM

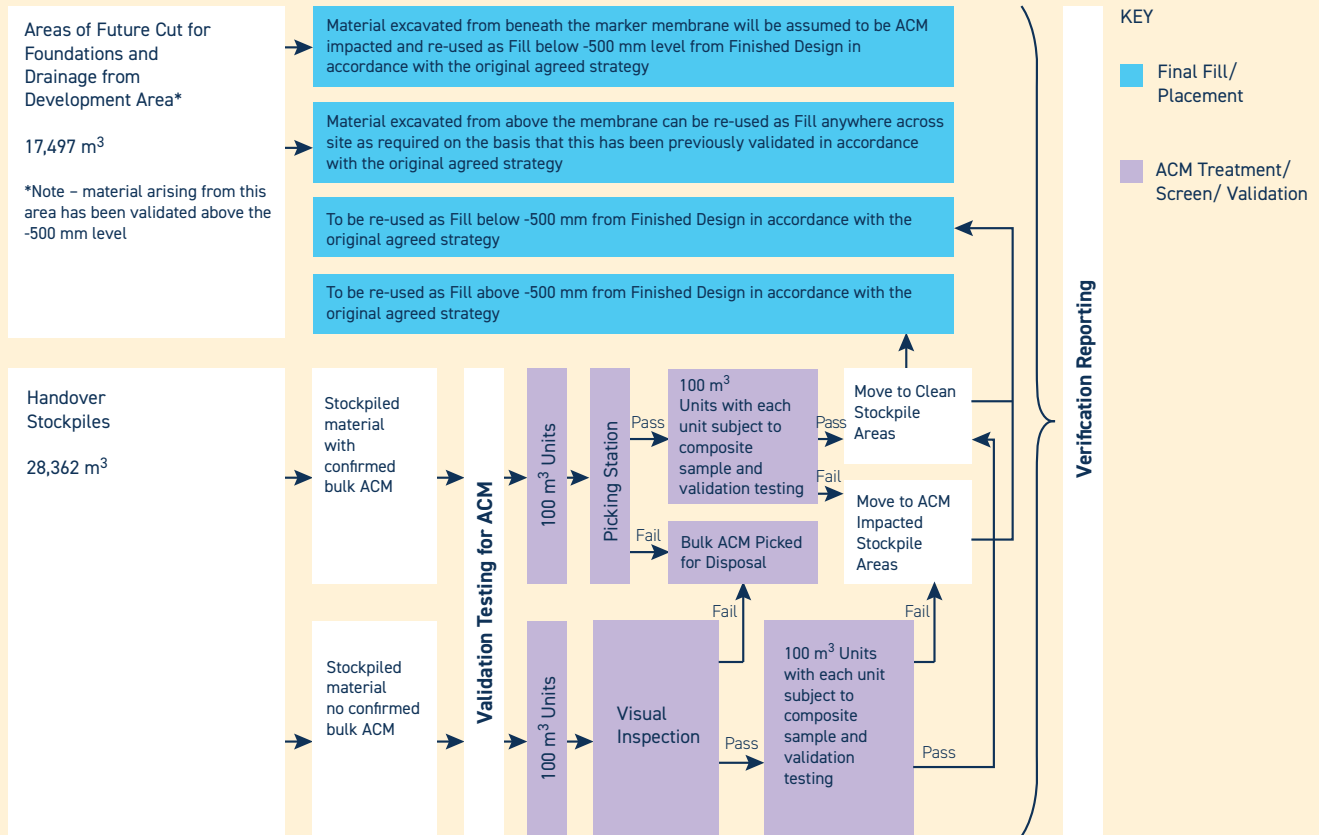


Figure C2.1 Material Management Flowchart

In order for the stockpiled materials to be re-used as part of the consented design a revised strategy was required to ensure the appropriate and safe re-use of these materials. AECOM prepared a detailed assessment on the levels of ACM and asbestos free fibres recorded in the materials and also quantified the level of risk posed by the materials. The soil re-use strategy was developed in accordance with the Control of Asbestos Regulations (2012) and the HSE Approved Code of Practice for managing and working with asbestos (ACoP L143) and gained regulatory agreement.

The strategy developed for the areas of impacted ground centred on a minimum of 500mm validated clean cover being placed below finished design level with the installation of a geotextile marker membrane at the interface of the clean cover

and existing ground level. The strategy also made provision for selected 6F2 (UK highway's grade of aggregate) stockpiles impacted with asbestos to be



Installation of the cover system | AECOM

treated through mechanical screening, sorting and hand picking to generate screened material that met agreed validation criteria (<0.001% asbestos). The mechanical screening successfully separating the larger size fractions that were free of asbestos from the smaller size fractions where the asbestos tended to be. The treated larger size fractions could then be recrushed to produce graded material suitable for use in the development without restriction. Stockpiles that were not treated were tracked and used in dedicated areas of the development under 500mm of clean cover with geotextile marker membrane. In areas where soils containing ACM were placed beneath cover, the strategy set out the principles and expectations for a future site management strategy that would need to be adopted upon completion.

The approach taken at this site ensured that the excavated and site-won materials were managed sustainably on site, minimising potential off-site disposal and material import consistent with the original design aspirations and expectations attached to the planning consent.



## 15 Opportunities for Harmonisation

There are opportunities for and benefits of harmonisation:

- The advocacy of sustainable approaches to risk management
- Greater recognition of the cost-benefit of waste minimisation using ex-situ or in-situ techniques
- A common understanding of risk and a risk-based, proportionate, response to asbestos in soil

There are also barriers to harmonisation that ultimately will limit the degree of harmonisation that is possible. For example:

- Different national legislation and regulatory guidance
- Differing risk perception and/or prioritisation
- Differing scale of issue
- Differing scientific opinion



Figure 15.1 Harmonised approach

## 16 Concluding Remarks


---

The problem of asbestos contaminated soil is a common one across Europe, albeit to varying degrees and largely linked to the historic use and management of asbestos in construction and demolition of buildings. It is a recognised challenge for the risk management of existing land use and the re-purposing of brownfield land in some but not all European countries. As result there are well established guidance and procedures in place in some countries and an absence in others. The variability in approaches is marked, with highly detailed and prescriptive regulator-driven guidance in countries such as The Netherlands and Belgium, and less prescriptive industry-led guidance in the UK.

The opportunities for harmonisation across countries are few—certainly in the short-term, and this is driven by the different legislature and regulatory

guidance in each country and the large differences in investigation approaches across European countries that have guidance in place. It is also evident that the approaches in countries are not all entirely risk-based. For example, the requirement to remove all visible fragments of asbestos in soil in Italy irrespective of the soil standard in Italy of 1000 mg/kg (which is the EU hazardous waste limit for asbestos). For many countries it is still the case that no risk-based guidance exists for asbestos in soil, and in those countries (unless gross asbestos contamination is identified) the consideration of low or trace levels of asbestos in soil is not a default consideration in site investigation design and land management.

There is therefore a place for advocating good practice in investigation, in risk assessment, and in



remediation, employing the best science and utilizing the most sustainable remediation options. This is relevant both for European countries where regulation and guidance is currently absent, and for European countries where guidance is in place.

The pace of change in asbestos regulation and guidance is slow and there are opportunities to learn from countries outside of Europe, for example the work of the US EPA in the USA and the work of the Australasian Land and Groundwater Association (ALGA) and BRANZ Ltd in Australia and New Zealand.



**CONTENT DISCLAIMER:**

This publication does not necessarily represent the opinions of all NICOLE members.

# Acknowledgements

---

NICOLE gratefully acknowledges the co-authors of this publication—Simon Cole (AECOM), Phil Studds (Ramboll) and Tomas Albergaria (Instituto Superior de Engenharia do Porto) - and the other members of the Asbestos in Soil Working Group - Jean-Louis Seveque (AquaTerraSana) and Caroline Dionisi (EDF)

The co-authors gratefully acknowledge the review and constructive feedback on the early drafts of this publication by their colleagues at AECOM and Ramboll, and the patience of the NICOLE Steering Group.

# Acronyms and Abbreviations

---

**ACM** Asbestos containing material

**AIB** Asbestos insulation board

**AISS** UK Health and Safety Laboratory (HSL) Proficiency Testing for Asbestos in  
<https://www.hsl.gov.uk/proficiency-testing-schemes/aiss>

**DRX** X-ray diffraction

**f/ml** a unit of measurement for air (asbestos fibres per millilitre of air sampled)

**f/m<sup>3</sup>** a unit of measurement for air (asbestos fibres per cubic metre of air sampled)

**FTIR** Fourier transform infrared spectrometry


**HSE** UK Health and Safety Executive <https://www.hse.gov.uk/>

**OVAM** Public waste agency of Flanders <https://www.ovam.be/>

**PCOM** Phase-contrast optical microscopy (alternative acronym used is PCM)

**PLM** Polarised light microscopy

**RIVM** Netherlands National Institute for Public Health and the Environment  
<https://www.rivm.nl/en>



**SCA** UK Standing Committee of Analysts  
<http://standingcommitteeofanalysts.co.uk/>

**SEM** Scanning electron microscopy

**SoBRA** UK Society of Brownfield Risk Assessment <https://sobra.org.uk/>

**SuRF** Sustainable Remediation Forum <https://www.sustainableremediation.org/>  
and <https://www.claire.co.uk/projects-and-initiatives/surf-uk>

**TEM** Transmission electron microscopy

**TNO** Netherlands Organisation for Applied Scientific Research  
<https://www.tno.nl/en/>

**VROM** Former Netherlands Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment (since 2010 with the Ministry of Infrastructure and the Environment)

**US EPA** United States Environmental Protection Agency <https://www.epa.gov/>



# Bibliography (1)

---

- Addison, J., Davies, L.S.T., Robertson, A., Wiley, R.J., (1988). *The release of dispersed asbestos fibres from soils*, IOM Research Report TM/88/14, Institute of Occupational Medicine
- Alexandrov, M., Ichida, E., Nishimura, T., Aoki, K., Ishida, T., Hirota, R., Ikeda, T., Kawasaki, T., & Kuroda, A. (2014). Development of an automated asbestos counting software based on fluorescence microscopy. *Environmental Monitoring and Assessment*, 187(1).
- Australian Government Comcare (2013). *Asbestos Innovation Fund Research Stream Closure Report for Innovative and cost effective health and safety field tool for the risk assessment of land that is potentially contaminated by asbestos*
- Bhattacharya, S., John, P. J., & Ledwani, L. (2015). Bacterial Weathering of Asbestos. *Silicon*, 7(4), 419–431.
- Bhattacharya, S., John, P. J., & Ledwani, L. (2016). Fungal weathering of asbestos in semi arid regions of India. *Ecotoxicology and Environmental Safety*, 124, 186–192.
- CIRIA (2016). *Asbestos in soil and made ground good practice site guide*. C765 [\[Link\]](#)
- CIRIA (2014). *Asbestos in soil and made ground: a guide to understanding and managing risks*. C733 [\[Link\]](#)
- Cossio, R., Albonico, C., Zanella, A., Fraterrigo-Garofalo, S., Avataneo, C., Compagnoni, R., & Turci, F. (2018). Innovative unattended SEM-EDS analysis for asbestos fiber quantification. *Talanta*, 190, 158–166.
- Gonneau, C., Miller, K., Mohanty, S. K., Xu, R., Hwang, W.-T., Willenbring, J. K., & Casper, B. B. (2017). Framework for assessment and phytoremediation of asbestos-contaminated sites. *Environmental Science and Pollution Research*, 24(33), 25912–25922.

## Bibliography (2)

---

- HSE (2021). *Asbestos: The Analysts' guide for sampling, analysis and clearance procedures (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.)*. HSG248, Health and Safety Executive. UK [\[Link\]](#)
- IBN (2020). *Management of Asbestos in Soils - An All-Ireland Guidance Document*. Ireland Brownfield Network, Asbestos in Soils Good Practice Subgroup. [\[Link\]](#)
- Januch, J., Brattin, W., Woodbury, L., & Berry, D. (2013). Evaluation of a fluidized bed asbestos segregator preparation method for the analysis of low-levels of asbestos in soil and other solid media. *Analytical Methods*, 5(7), 1658.
- Kumar, A., & Maiti, S. K. (2014). Effect of Organic Manures on the Growth of *Cymbopogon citratus* and *Chrysopogon zizanioides* for the Phytoremediation of Chromite-Asbestos Mine Waste: A Pot Scale Experiment. *International Journal of Phytoremediation*, 17(5), 437–447.
- Kumar, A., T., & Maiti, S. K. (2019). Phytoremediation of chromite-asbestos mine waste using aromatic grasses and organic manures. *Journal of Biotechnology*, 305.
- Le Blansch, K., den Boeft, K., Tempelman, J. (2018). *On the lookout for practicable sustainable options for asbestos waste treatment: A technical, sustainability and market assessment*. Bureau KLB
- Legislative Decree April 3rd, 2006, n. 152, Environmental Regulations. *Norme in materia ambientale*. pubblicato sulla G.U. 88 del 14 aprile 2006. Italy
- Mohanty, S. K., Gonneau, C., Salamatipour, A., Pietrofesa, R. A., Casper, B., Christofidou-Solomidou, M., & Willenbring, J. K. (2018). Siderophore-mediated iron removal from chrysotile: Implications for asbestos toxicity reduction and bioremediation. *Journal of Hazardous Materials*, 341, 290–296.

## Bibliography (3)

---

- OVAM (2020). *Code of good practice asbestos for descriptive soil investigation*. [\[Link\]](#)
- OVAM (2020). *Guideline strategy 8 asbestos for Phase I investigations*. [\[Link\]](#)
- OVAM (2020). *Procedure for Phase I investigations*. [\[Link\]](#)
- OVAM (2019). *Code of good practice asbestos, use of soil material*. [\[Link\]](#)
- Pawelczyk, A., Božek, F., Grabas, K., & Chęćmanowski, J. (2017). Chemical elimination of the harmful properties of asbestos from military facilities. *Waste Management*, 61, 377–385.
- Society of Brownfield Risk Assessment: SoBRA (2020). *Asbestos in Soil Sub-Group Discussion Papers (2015-2020)*. available at [\[Link\]](#)
- SIKB (2018), Ground-level inspection and sampling of asbestos in soil, Protocol 2018, Version 6.0, 1 February 2018 available at [https://www.sikb.nl/doc/BRL2000/Protocol\\_2018\\_v6\\_0\\_20180201.pdf](https://www.sikb.nl/doc/BRL2000/Protocol_2018_v6_0_20180201.pdf)
- Standing Committee of Analysts (2017). *The quantification of asbestos in soil, Methods for the Examination of Waters and Associated Materials*. [withdrawn in October 2020] [\[Link\]](#)
- Swartjes, F. A., & Tromp, P. C. (2008). A Tiered Approach for the Assessment of the Human Health Risks of Asbestos in Soils. *Soil and Sediment Contamination: An International Journal*, 17(2), 137–149.
- United States Environmental Protection Agency: Asbestos Committee of the Technical Review Workgroup of the Office of Solid Waste and Emergency Response (2008). *Framework for*

## Bibliography (4)

---

*Investigating Asbestos-Contaminated Superfund Sites*. OSWER Directive 9200.0-68, September 2008. [\[Link\]](#)

Valouma, A., Verganelaki, A., Maravelaki-Kalaitzaki, P., & Gidararakos, E. (2016). Chrysotile asbestos detoxification with a combined treatment of oxalic acid and silicates producing amorphous silica and biomaterial. *Journal of Hazardous Materials*, *305*, 164–170.

Van Orden, D. R. (2018). Identification and analysis of ambient EMPs. *Toxicology and Applied Pharmacology*, *361*, 21–26.

VROM/ Ministry of Infrastructure and Environment (2013). *Soil Remediation Circular per 1 July 2013, annex 3* (stcrt-2013-16675). The Hague: Staatscourant. [\[Link\]](#) Soil Remediation Circular PDF Free Download. (n.d.). [\[Link\]](#)

Wroble, J., Frederick, T., Frame, A., & Vallero, D. (2017). Comparison of soil sampling and analytical methods for asbestos at the Sumas Mountain Asbestos Site—Working towards a toolbox for better assessment. *PLOS ONE*, *12*(7).


Yamani, M. E., Boulanger, G., Nerrière-Catelinois, E., Paillat, A., Modelon, H., Soyez, A., Paquet, F., Binet, S., Paris, C., & Brochard, P. (2012). Revision of French Occupational Exposure Limits of Asbestos and Recommendation of Measurement Method: Can the Dimensional Characteristics of the Asbestos Fibers (Long, Thin, Short) Be Taken Into Account? *Critical Reviews in Environmental Science and Technology*, *42*(14), 1441–1484.

# Colofon

---

## NICOLE Working Group Asbestos:

Chair:	Simon Cole, AECOM, UK
Members:	Caroline Dionisi, EDF, France Jean-Louis Sévèque, AquaTerra, France Phil Studds, Ramboll, UK Tomás Albergaria, ISEP, Portugal
Review:	Elze-Lia Visser, NICOLE, The Netherlands
Design & lay-out:	Just Josi, The Netherlands
Issued:	June 2021
Copyright:	NICOLE



NICOLE is a leading forum on industrially co-ordinated sustainable land management in Europe, promoting co-operation between industry, academia and service providers on the development and application of sustainable technologies. The overall objective of NICOLE is to pro-actively enable European industry to identify, assess and manage industrially contaminated land efficiently, cost-effectively, and within a framework of sustainability.

Further information: [www.NICOLE.org](http://www.NICOLE.org)

