

For discussion on
12 June 2006

Panel on Education

Implementation of Asbestos Management Plan on the Premises of Aided Schools

Purpose

This paper seeks Members' agreement for the implementation of Asbestos Management Plan (AMP) on the premises of aided schools.

Background

2. The Finance Committee approved vide FCR(94-95)75 on 2 December 1994 the creation of a non-recurrent commitment of \$27.519 million for the then Education Department to engage registered asbestos consultants, through Architectural Services Department (ArchSD) and Housing Department (HD), to conduct asbestos investigations on the premises of aided schools. The exercise commenced upon the enactment of the Air Pollution Control Ordinance (APCO) (Cap. 311) in 1997. Since there are only a limited number of registered asbestos consultants and registered asbestos laboratories, the asbestos investigation had to be carried out by phases and was completed in 2005. Of the about 900 school premises investigated, 560 have been found with asbestos-containing materials (ACM).

3. According to the guidelines of Environmental Protection Department (EPD), ACM that may cause imminent release of asbestos fibres should be removed as soon as they are identified. With the combined efforts of the Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB), ArchSD, HD and EPD, all friable or potentially damaged ACM with imminent risk to public health have been removed from school premises concerned in the investigation programme completed in 2005. The remaining ACM are chalkboards, vinyl floor tiles and corrugated cement roofing sheets, which are in good conditions and made of durable materials of insignificant risk to public health. Provided they are properly managed and maintained, these low-risk ACM¹ need not be removed

¹ Low-risk ACM are cementitious, resinated, plastic and bituminous asbestos containing materials which are non-friable in nature. Non-friable ACM are ACM which when dry cannot be crumbled, pulverized or reduced to powder by hand pressure. Asbestos fibres in this low risk ACM are generally locked into the base material matrix. Under normal usage, the quantity of asbestos fibres that can be released, if any, should be insignificant to present a health risk.

immediately; instead, they could be left in place undisturbed and removed at the time when major repairs for schools are being held.

4. Nonetheless, EMB intends to remove all ACM completely from school premises in five years to eliminate any possible risks. The schedule is worked out on the estimation that ACM would be removed from about 20% of the schools (i.e. about 110 schools) each year with reference to the following factors –

- (a) asbestos removal works can only be carried out in major school holidays to minimise disturbance to schools; and
- (b) the limited number of registered asbestos contractors (around ten according to EPD's register) available in the market qualified for carrying out asbestos works would limit the scale of removal programme that can be held each year for schools with ACM.

5. As it is a requirement under APCO that owner of premises with ACM shall appoint registered asbestos consultants (RAC) to manage and maintain ACM in good conditions as specified in the AMP before their ultimate removal, the Administration will arrange for implementing AMP in the 560 school premises found with ACM in the investigation programme completed in 2005.

Proposal

6. The Administration intends to provide \$55.44 million for hiring RAC to implement AMP for proper management of ACM before their eventual removal from school premises concerned. To minimize the disturbance to schools, ACM will be scheduled for removal in the annual major repairs exercise.

7. The Administration plans to launch the management cycle in the 2006/07 school year and complete it by the end of the 2011/12 school year. With the arrangement of removing ACM from about 110 schools annually, the number of schools requiring AMP will be reduced by 20% each year upon complete ACM removal from all of them. ArchSD (or HD in the case of estate schools) will continue to provide support to schools in the annual maintenance works of school premises. As prescribed in APCO, RAC will give notice to EPD before commencement of asbestos removal works, and EPD will assist EMB in keeping central record of ACM removal progress.

8. The RAC appointed will be responsible for overseeing all asbestos-related activities on school premises. On the other hand, a centralized

management team in EMB, comprising staff seconded from ArchSD, will be set up for the implementation of AMP. The responsibilities of the RAC and the centralized management team in EMB are at Appendix. The centralized management team in EMB together with the RAC will provide AMP services to all aided schools concerned (including estate schools whose maintenance works are under the purview of HD). Funding will be incurred by the EMB direct and will not be disbursed to the aided schools. This model would save the administrative efforts of individual schools.

Financial Implications

9. Based on the estimated cost of about \$30,000 per school per year for implementing AMP as well as contingency, the estimated total expenditure for carrying out AMP on the premises of aided schools is \$55.44 million.

10. The cost of ACM removal works, if required, will be met from Head 156 Subhead 900 Codes of Aid for existing schools – maintenance, repairs and minor improvement (block vote) for projects not exceeding \$2 million, Capital Works Reserve Fund Head 708 Subhead 8100QX Alterations, additions, repairs and improvements to education subvented buildings for projects exceeding \$2 million but not exceeding \$15 million, or individual subheads under the CWRP if the works are to be conducted as a part of the larger renovation or redevelopment projects. The staff cost for setting up the centralized management team will be absorbed within existing resources of EMB.

Advice Sought

11. Members' views are sought for the proposed implementation of AMP on the premises of aided schools. We plan to seek the approval of the Finance Committee for the creation of the new commitment in due course.

Education and Manpower Bureau
June 2006

Major Responsibilities of Parties Involved

I. Registered Asbestos Consultants

- (a) to submit updated asbestos investigation reports in two months after verification of the remaining ACM and revising, if applicable, the asbestos management plan accordingly;
- (b) to conduct regular ACM inspections and surveillance;
- (c) to label all remaining ACM;
- (d) to offer advice to school management as and when necessary, and to notify parents, teachers and employee groups about the presence of ACM and asbestos related activities in consultation with the school management;
- (e) to arrange awareness training and briefing for school personnel concerned;
- (f) to set up a record keeping system for ACM; and
- (g) to supervise the registered asbestos contractor for asbestos removal works.

II. Centralized Management Team in EMB

- (a) to prepare tender documents and to arrange tendering for the appointment of asbestos consultants to implement AMP for schools;
- (b) to monitor and manage the appointed consultants for proper implementation of AMP; and
- (c) to coordinate with the consultants / schools for preparing schedules for carrying out asbestos removal works during annual major repairs exercise.