



Executive summary of the public audit report

REMOVAL OF PRODUCTS CONTAINING ASBESTOS

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Full audit report in Lithuanian is available on the website
of the National Audit Office
: www.vkontrole.lt

DEFINITIONS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Asbestos: fibrous silicates including crocidolite (blue asbestos), actinolite, anthophyllite, chrysotile (white asbestos), amosite (brown asbestos) and tremolite. Physical properties such as its resistance to fire and chemicals, sound absorption and poor thermal conductivity once made asbestos a popular component in various materials in construction and other fields (roofing materials, non-pressure pipes used in the construction of sewage systems, thermal insulation for boilers and district heating systems, asbestos fabric, fire-resistant clothing and various screens, wire insulation, brake pad linings)¹.

Carcinogen: a chemical substance that can cause malignant tumour growth².

Asbestos roofing sheets: roofing made of asbestos cement sheets (typically corrugated).

ACM: asbestos-containing materials.

Asbestos removal: the safe removal, dismantling, packaging, transportation and storage of asbestos or asbestos-containing materials.

Asbestos waste disposal: the transportation and disposal of removed, dismantled and packaged asbestos or asbestos-containing materials in landfills.

ACM disposal resources: specific locations for dumping asbestos and asbestos waste.

Inventory of asbestos-containing materials: cataloguing the number of buildings that contain ACM, and the amount and condition of the ACM in these buildings³.

Institution coordinating the programme: the Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania.

NPA: the National Payment Agency under the Ministry of Agriculture.

RWMC: regional waste management centres.

¹ Resolution No. 351 of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania of 17 April 2008 on approving the programme for the removal of asbestos.

² <http://www.lrs.lt/pls/tb/tb.search>.

³ Order No. D1-267 of the Minister of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania of 11 May 2009 on approving the description of the procedure for conducting an inventory of asbestos-containing materials.

SUMMARY

Physical properties such as resistance to fire and chemicals as well as great thermal and sound insulation once meant that asbestos was widely used in Lithuania. According to data provided by the World Health Organisation, asbestos and asbestos-containing materials are harmful to the environment and human health.

The production of asbestos-containing materials and their introduction into the market is prohibited in Lithuania and the entire European Union. However, the issue of ACM removal is left in the hands of individual member states. In 2013, the European Parliament passed a resolution with which member states are urged to:

- implement asbestos screening and registration;
- identify diseases linked to the effects of asbestos;
- develop a programme for the disposal of ACM.

Seeking to remove asbestos-containing materials from the environment, the Government of the Republic of Lithuania has approved an Asbestos Removal Programme and provided the measures and funding for its implementation.

As part of a strategic study, the National Audit Office of Lithuania identified certain risk factors – including the fact that no system for the removal of asbestos had been developed and no comprehensive measures had been designed for the removal of ACM in the future – and decided to conduct a performance audit for the purpose of assessing whether the removal of asbestos was being ensured in Lithuania. The audit targeted the following points:

- whether adequate planning for the removal of ACM was being ensured;
- whether accurate records of ACM were being kept;
- whether the measures of the implemented programme were in line with programme objectives.

The subject of the audit was the Ministry of Environment, which shapes policy on environmental protection control and pollution prevention, the use of natural resources, climate change, the management of chemical substances and materials and the assessment of their environmental impact, shapes waste (except for radioactive waste) management policy, controls and coordinates its implementation, as well as coordinates the implementation of the asbestos removal programme and implements certain programme measures.

Auditing procedures were carried out in:

- the Ministry of Agriculture, which is responsible for the replacement of asbestos sheet roofing under the Rural Development Programme that it coordinates;
- the National Payment Agency, which implements and controls asbestos roofing replacement operations;
- select municipalities that organise the removal of ACM and asbestos waste; regional waste management centres that implement ACM disposal in landfills.

The audit was carried out over the 2008–2013 period in order to identify the changes that occurred during the implementation period of the Asbestos Removal Programme. Later stages of activity were analysed in order to identify trends, changes and other decisions made up to the

end of the auditing procedure regarding the removal of ACM and the implementation of these decisions.

The following public audit conclusions and recommendations were drawn upon the assessment of the audit findings.

CONCLUSIONS

The ACM removal process in Lithuania has been slow (from 2008 to 2014, only 6% of 1 million tonnes were removed), and responsible parties have failed to develop a general and effective system for removing asbestos-containing materials that would benefit the environment and reduce negative impact on human health:

1. A total of 51 municipal governments conducted an ACM inventory and determined the amounts of these materials present in their areas; however, no aggregated nation-wide data is available in the country about the number of buildings that contain asbestos materials and their condition, which makes planning for the further removal of asbestos even more difficult (Section 1).
2. In Lithuania, asbestos-containing materials are disposed of as part of the Asbestos Removal and Lithuanian Rural Development programmes, however, the removal process is not comprehensive:
 - 2.1. The measures of the Asbestos Removal Programme only made a slight contribution:
 - 2.1.1. measures implemented from 2013 to 2014 intended to encourage the removal of ACM were unappealing and did not motivate the target audience to address the issue as compensation was only available for the cost of disposing ACM waste in landfills, and not for the costs of replacing roofing material and transportation (unlike in the measures of the Rural Support Programme), (Section 1);
 - 2.1.2. only 16 of 60 municipal governments took advantage of the funding available for the removal of asbestos and removed 1.5 thousand tonnes of ACM waste, which makes up 8.5% of all of the asbestos removed in Lithuania in 2014 (Section 1).
 - 2.2. Funds from the Lithuania Rural Development Fund for the removal of asbestos are only allocated to residents of rural areas – they receive compensation for the costs of purchasing replacement roofing, waste transportation and landfill disposal. The programme does not fund the removal of asbestos from other types of buildings and does not ensure that asbestos-containing materials that are in the worst condition are removed first (Section 2).
3. When the implementation period for measures under the 2008–2013 Asbestos Removal Programme came to an end, no asbestos removal programme was approved or continued, which is why no measures encouraging the removal of asbestos were planned for cities and communities with populations of over 6 thousand (Section 1).

RECOMMENDATIONS

To the Government of the Republic of Lithuania:

With a view to implementing the EU recommendations for reducing environmental asbestos pollution and thus improving the condition of the environment and ensuring a healthier environment, the following actions must be taken:

1. create a comprehensive system for the removal of asbestos-containing materials across the entire country:
 - 1.1. set objectives for the removal of ACM, approve measure for the removal of these materials, set priorities and provide for funding (conclusions 2 and 3);
 - 1.2. establish a procedure for controlling ACM accounting and removal as well as for assessing impact on the environment and the public (conclusions 1, 2 and 3);
2. assign the institutions responsible for ACM inventory, accounting and removal, assessment of impact on the environment and public, and the implementation of removal measures (conclusions 1, 2 and 3).