

Safe and effective asbestos removal

MBC Environmental Solutions is a family owned company, operated by Office Manager, Felicity Drennan, and Operations Manager, Mark Hamilton. Both Felicity and Mark have a very hands-on approach when it comes to providing solutions for their clients.

MBC differs from other asbestos removalists because others generally have a background in demolition and building whereas MBC's background is in environmental contracting, with a specialisation in hazardous substances.

MBC comes at projects from an environmental point of view when managing asbestos, toxic mould or erosion and sediment control.

MBC's unique insights into the building and demolition industries are greatly due to Mark's background in the field, which includes a Bachelor's Degree in Environmental Science, a Master of Science, and qualifications in health and safety and asbestos surveying.

At MBC, the team believes in the power of knowledge and collaboration. Its membership of the NZDAA enables MBC to collaborate with other members to bring about better health and safety outcomes for New Zealand.

With regards to its NZDAA membership, MBC's operations manager, Mark Hamilton, says, "It's fantastic to have somebody in the industry that can represent us all.

Work Safe requires Class B licences for the removal non-friable asbestos greater than 10m² and Class A licenses are required for the removal of friable asbestos. MBC Environmental Solutions is a licenced asbestos removalist, holding both Class A and Class B licences.

MBC is also qualified to undertake asbestos surveys, holding IP402 (Surveying and Sampling Strategies for Asbestos in Buildings) certification, along with many years of experience.

"This field is quite a specialist area of work. There's been a lot of changes over the last few years, especially in regards to regulations and best practice. I think it's a really positive thing to be able to get together, collaborate, have a voice that can represent us."

A proud member of the NZDAA, Mark says that taking a collective stance as an industry, through the NZDAA, enables industry leaders to talk with decision makers in Wellington, for example.



MBC's operations manager, Mark Hamilton, and office manager, Felicity Drennan.

This is especially important for ensuring the safety of contractors and people potentially exposed to asbestos and other hazardous substances.

University of Canterbury refurbishment project

MBC has recently completed a 16 month long project on behalf of the University of Canterbury (UC), working alongside Brosnan Construction, which was the main contractor for the project.

The work included the extensive refurbishment of two six storey buildings, Elsie Locke and James Logie, where MBC was in charge of removing the asbestos.

Although the asbestos containing materials pose no risk to building users under normal circumstances, during refurbishment works the materials can be disturbed and therefore require careful management.

The removal included a large quantity of highly friable millboard near the heating system, along with numerous asbestos rope seals at most penetrations between floors and asbestos bitumen paint.

In addition, almost every single external window and door had asbestos glazing putty and an asbestos mastic joining the metal frames to the concrete.

Mark says that asbestos glazing putty and mastic are not commonly identified but are something that people in the industry are becoming more aware of, as they are relatively common, particularly in large public and commercial buildings.

Projects of this nature often include a number of accidental discoveries of materials. Accidental discoveries are to be expected with any project. However, it becomes an issue if the sub-contractors involved are not able to recognise asbestos when it is present.

Reflecting on the project, Mark states, "Almost every single project has an accidental discovery protocol where they say: if you find asbestos, put down your tools and notify someone. But if the workers don't know what asbestos looks like, then that doesn't really work, does it?"

As a preventative measure, MBC worked with Brosnan Construction to come up with a training exercise so everyone involved in the project could properly identify the asbestos that may be present.

According to the Ministry of Health, inhaling large amounts of airborne asbestos can cause:

- Asbestosis
- Mesothelioma
- Pleural plaques
- Cancer of the lung, larynx and ovary.

That's why it's important to hire certified asbestos removalists and surveyors when removing and managing asbestos.

The MBC team has a collection of asbestos containing materials, in sealed cases, to safely run training with sub-contractors, so they can properly identify asbestos specific to their context.

"For example, it's really important for them to recognise and be able to tell the difference between cement board, insulation board and millboard" says Mark.

Asbestos aside, another challenge that presented itself was that parts of the site were live when the project took place; in other words, students and faculty used the campus and some parts of the buildings during the refurbishment process.

In order to remove the large amount of asbestos safely, the six storeys of each building were divided into sections, with floors allocated to MBC to remove asbestos, floors allocated to Brosnan to refurbish and other floors open to building users for normal use.

The floors would change hands depending on the progress of the project. This plan was applied to both buildings, requiring the coordination of twelve storeys in total.

Mark says a project like this necessitates really effective communication, teamwork and collaboration, along with robust Health and Safety processes. Together, MBC, Brosnan and UC were able to complete the refurbishment efficiently and safely.

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Asbestos containing millboard, putty and mastic removed from offices.



Refurbished offices, post works.