

Organisational implications of the discovery of asbestos at the NSWFB USAR training site, Holsworthy

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In 2006 the NSWFB became aware of the presence of asbestos in the training stockpile at the USAR training site at Holsworthy in NSW.

This site had been utilised for major counterterrorism and USAR training by a large number of personnel from a range of state, national and overseas emergency service organisations, thus potentially exposing thousands of personnel to asbestos.

This paper explores the strategies adopted by the NSWFB to manage this incident and the longer term impact of this incident for the organisation.

This presentation will provide an overview of the immediate steps adopted to manage the issue within and outside of the organisation from a OHS risk management, public relations and health perspective; the ground-breaking asbestos health risk assessment commissioned by the NSWFB to ascertain whether there had been a health risk from the exposure; the health screening program now implemented across the organisation and the longer term risk management initiatives and learnings that have flowed and continue to flow from the incident.