

Northern Distributor Road

Naturally Occurring Asbestos - Frequently Asked Questions

What is Naturally Occurring Asbestos (NOA) and how does it form?

SafeWork NSW states that asbestos is a name given to group of naturally occurring fibrous silicate minerals found in rock, sediment, or soil, and the term Naturally Occurring Asbestos (NOA) distinguishes these natural occurrences from manufactured products that contain asbestos.

Asbestos minerals are commonly found around the world in certain types of rock including serpentinite (chrysotile [white]) and amphibole (actinolite, amosite [brown], anthophyllite, crocidolite [blue] and tremolite) as well as in the soils formed from these rock types.

What does NOA look like?



Where has NOA has been found on the Northern Distributor Road?

Orange is a known area for NOA, so it was vital that geotechnical investigations were carried out before starting any work to rebuild the Northern Distributor Road corridor in Orange.

Transport for NSW carried out geotechnical investigations of the Northern Distributor Road on February 5 and 6, 2025 with 52 samples taken for testing along a 2.8-kilometre section of the road.

Two of the 52 samples taken contained NOA, and a further 10 samples had material that could potentially contain NOA.

How will you fix the road with NOA present?

With the confirmation of NOA onsite, plans to rebuild the 2.8 kilometre section of the Northern Distributor Road cannot include extensive excavation that could disturb the material.

NOA in its natural state is not considered dangerous to humans but it can become dangerous when broken up and moved.

That means the best and safest way to rebuild the Northern Distributor Road will be to lay new layers of asphalt over the existing surface, slowly building up the road and filling the potholes and rough areas that have forced us to temporarily lower the speed limit to 60 km/h.

Work to install the first new layer of asphalt will take place before winter as cold and wet conditions can impact the successful placement of asphalt.

Crews will then return later in 2025 to continue the job, with several thicker layers to be placed to provide a smoother road surface for all motorists and allow for the eventual return of an 80 km/h speed limit for all vehicles.

How is the project safely managing NOA?

All works are being undertaken under **full asbestos management controls**, overseen by a Class A Asbestos Supervisor, Licensed Asbestos Assessor and Hygienist. Workers are dressed in appropriate protective clothing, including coveralls and masks.

Can NOA infiltrate the watercourse?

NOA is not a soluble product that can dissolve into groundwater and migrate through the soil strata. This means that it cannot infiltrate the water table or migrate outside the project site and be drawn out of bores on adjacent properties. Notwithstanding, NOA does not cause harm through ingestion, it is only airborne fibres that are inhaled that pose a risk.

The project is following strict guidelines to manage this in accordance with regulations of SafeWork NSW and the NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA).

Can NOA affect plants, animals & water?

The primary risk to health from NOA is when asbestos fibres become airborne, or settle on clothing, equipment or buildings and can later be disturbed and inhaled. As the NOA is being managed within the site, the works are not posing a risk to plants, animals or water.

Contact us

If you have any questions or would like more information, please contact our West Region project team:



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