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# Revised asbestos testing under AS 5370:2024

## ALS is now accredited for asbestos testing under the revised AS 5370:2024 standard, expanding analytical capabilities in support of occupational hygiene and risk assessment across Australia.

In 2024, Standards Australia released the updated asbestos testing standard, AS 5370:2024, Sampling and Qualitative Identification of Asbestos in Bulk Materials. The revised standard was developed to modernise asbestos analysis in Australia and align laboratory practices with contemporary analytical approaches, superseding AS 4964:2004, Method for the Qualitative Identification of Asbestos in Bulk Samples, which had been the primary analytical method used across the country for bulk asbestos identification.

AS 5370:2024 introduces several significant updates that improve the robustness and defensibility of asbestos analysis and reporting. The revised framework enables consultants and regulators to interpret results using a more risk-based assessment approach, rather than relying solely on the historical zero-tolerance model.

ALS recognises these changes and has expanded our scope of accreditation to provide testing under both AS 5370:2024 and AS 4964:2004.

### Asbestos regulations in Australia – building on the AS 4964:2004

Implementation of the standard is supported by broader regulatory initiatives. Under Phase 3 of the Asbestos National Strategic Plan (ANSP), it is estimated that approximately six million tonnes of asbestos-containing materials remain in the Australian built environment and have yet to be removed or safely disposed of in landfill.

Australian laboratories continue to identify asbestos in imported products that were previously assumed to be asbestos-free. These discoveries have reinforced the need for more sensitive and reliable analytical techniques.

While AS 4964:2004 served as the primary analytical method for laboratories for many years, its limited guidance for analysing soil and other complex matrices resulted in variations in methodology and interpretation between laboratories. AS 5370:2024 addresses these gaps by providing more prescriptive methodology and clearer analytical pathways. It also brings Australian laboratory practices closer to international approaches, including alignment with ISO 22262-1:2012.

### Changing practices in asbestos assessment

AS 4964:2004 was primarily designed to determine the presence or absence of asbestos in bulk and relatively homogeneous materials. This reflected the historical regulatory position in Australia that any detectable asbestos was considered unacceptable, leading to a largely zero-tolerance approach to reporting.

However, this framework limited the ability to apply modern risk-based assessment approaches, particularly when dealing with complex environmental matrices such as soils. These limitations were a key driver for the development of AS 5370:2024.

Both standards continue to place strong emphasis on

polarised light microscopy (PLM) as the primary analytical technique, with AS 5370:2024 additionally recognising the use of scanning electron microscopy (SEM) and transmission electron microscopy (TEM) as complementary methods. These techniques allow laboratories to identify additional asbestos fibre types – many of which are difficult to conclusively identify using PLM alone – while also providing greater analytical certainty.

The introduction of clearer methodology for soil and fine particulate matrices, combined with greater procedural standardisation, allows laboratory results to be more directly comparable across laboratories. This improves confidence in analytical data for consultants, occupational hygienists and risk assessors, while supporting more consistent regulatory decision-making.

**Key differences between the standards include:**

- Expands testing beyond bulk materials to include soil matrices
- Formalises the use of SEM and TEM as complementary analytical techniques
- Expands target asbestos minerals to include tremolite, actinolite and anthophyllite
- Introduces greater standardisation of laboratory workflows and analytical processes
- Establishes clear reporting limits, replacing the previous allowances to report based on state or federal government guidelines.

While laboratories and regulations across both state and federal levels adapt to AS 5370:2024, testing may continue to be undertaken under both standards where permitted by the relevant regulatory or project requirements, with the aim of gradually phasing out AS 4964:2004.

Clients should communicate with their local regulators to ensure testing is carried out to the applicable standard and correct reporting limits.



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## Sample analysis and method codes

All asbestos bulk samples must be analysed by a NATA-accredited laboratory in accordance with AS 5370:2024 or an equivalent recognised method.

Our in-house method has been developed in accordance with AS 5370:2024 – NATA accreditation applies to specific test parameters. Method EA199 uses PLM and dispersive staining for the qualitative identification of asbestos fibre types such as amosite, chrysotile and crocidolite, ensuring comprehensive identification of asbestos fibre types in bulk samples and compliance with the updated Australian standard. EA200 remains the method code for the AS 4964:2004 application.

Clients are encouraged to consult with local regulators to confirm whether the limit of reporting (LOR) of 0.1 g/kg is suitable for their specific regulatory or project requirements.

ALS currently offers asbestos testing under both standards through its Melbourne, Victoria, and Newcastle, New South Wales laboratories.

***Table 1.*** *List of ALS test parameters for asbestos testing under AS 5370:2024*

| Test parameter | Code | LOR |
|---|---|---|
| Asbestos – Presence/Absence in Bulk Solids (boards, tiles, gaskets, etc.) | EA199B | Presence/Absence |
| Friable Asbestos (FA+AF) – Weight and % as Asbestos in Soil* | EA199F | 0.001% w/w |
| Asbestos – Presence/Absence in Soil (including free fibres) | EA199G | Presence/Absence (0.01% w/w) |
| Bonded (Non-Friable) ACM determination plus Asbestos estimation (includes sieving to 7 mm)* | EA199N | 0.01% w/w |
| Friable Asbestos (FA+AF) – Weight and % as Asbestos in Soil* | EA199N | 0.001% w/w |
| Asbestos in Water – Presence/Absence* | EA199W | Presence/Absence |

* Not NATA-accredited



## Contact us

Contact your ALS project manager for more information about asbestos testing under AS 5370:2024.


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