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\$1m set aside for study on asbestos

By EAMONN FITZPATRICK

MORE than \$1 million is to be spent on a study aimed at reducing the dangers of asbestos in Hongkong.

The Government has commissioned an in-depth study, to begin next month, on the handling of asbestos in the private sector in a bid to tighten controls on its removal.

The assistant director of the Environmental Protection Department (EPD), Mr Robert Law, said yesterday that the six-month study would focus on establishing a licensing system, codes of practice and employee training standards for asbestos removal contractors.

Although there are six Government-approved private contractors working on official and subvented projects, the EDP exercises only minimal administrative control over them.

"Over the last few years in Hongkong we have seen asbestos removal work carried out in a manner which we would not be particularly happy with in terms of safety for the public," Mr Law said.

"The control of asbestos — dealing with removal in particular — is not really sufficient in its ability to protect members of the public.

"The legislation that is set up at the moment is to protect workers."

The \$1.3 million study, to be conducted by Balfours International (Asia) Consulting Engineers, will examine existing legislation and limited data on the use of the material in the territory as well as asbestos controls in other countries.