

Removing Asbestos from Your Home

Read this booklet for:

- steps and care you should take if your home has asbestos-containing material
- advice about protective gear.



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Te Whatu Ora
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Identifying asbestos risks in and around your home

Asbestos fibres can cause health problems if they become airborne and are inhaled. Different kinds of asbestos present different risks.

The greatest risk is from 'friable' forms of asbestos, mainly used in the past for insulation. Friable asbestos easily releases harmful fibres that cause damage when they are inhaled. It is unusual to find 'friable' asbestos in a home, but it does occur.

The other main kind of asbestos is 'non-friable', which means asbestos that has been incorporated in manufactured products known as asbestos-containing materials.

In the home, asbestos-containing materials may be found in:

- textured ceilings and linings
- asbestos cement cladding, roofing or water pipes

- asbestos-backed or asbestos-containing floor coverings
- soil, under/around the home.

We recommend that, as a rule of thumb, when assessing the risks, you restrict the work you do yourself to an area of asbestos-containing material that is less than 10 metres square. This is consistent with the requirements for workplaces seeking to deal with asbestos-containing material.

This resource is only intended to provide guidance if you decide to remove asbestos-containing material in your home. 'Friable' asbestos should only be removed by a WorkSafe New Zealand licensed asbestos removalist.



How to remove asbestos-containing material from your home

The Health and Safety at Work (Asbestos) Regulations 2016 (the Asbestos Regulations) set stringent requirements for asbestos removal work in all workplaces.

They require the use of a licensed asbestos removalist for all asbestos removal work involving friable asbestos (class A) or any asbestos-containing material such as asbestos cement sheets for areas over 10 m² (class B). Asbestos removalists are licensed by WorkSafe New Zealand. The Asbestos Regulations do not apply to asbestos removal work you do in or around your own home, but they do apply to any person you engage to work on your home.

Because of the risk to health, Te Whatu Ora recommends that you use a WorkSafe New Zealand licensed asbestos removalist to remove any substantial quantity of asbestos.

Do not risk your health or the health of other people by incorrect or unnecessary removal of asbestos. Working with asbestos or asbestos-containing material can be a risk to health. Always use special asbestos removing equipment and take special care when working around and with asbestos.

It is vital that you fully protect yourself and others at all times, indoors and outdoors.

Prepare yourself and the area thoroughly

Before you begin any work involving asbestos-containing material, consult the following checklist.

- Clear the area and surroundings of people and pets. Children and animals must not be able to enter the area.
- Clear the area of any removable objects, including furniture.
- Line all other surfaces (ie, floors, walls, fixtures, etc) with polyethylene film fastened with strong adhesive tape.
- Place clear warning signs to keep people away.
- Fasten all windows and doors if working inside, and seal around them with tape.
- Turn off electricity.
- Cover electrical circuits and close air conditioning or ventilation systems.
- Wear disposable overalls (with hood), gloves and shoe coverings to keep dust off your clothes and skin.
- Wear protective clothing and a respiratory mask at all times until all work has been completed and the area has been fully cleaned up.

- Use a properly fitting P1 or P2 dust respirator at all times. Get expert advice on the correct type of respirator from a firm that sells safety equipment.
- Wetting the area, using a low pressure sprayer, lowers dust levels – never use a high pressure jet to wet the area.
- As part of good work practice, do not eat, drink or smoke while working with asbestos.
- Use a vacuum cleaner fitted with a HEPA (High Efficiency Particulate Air) filter and a bag. Note that there are HEPA vacuum cleaners available now that are bagless.

Take special care to avoid asbestos dust

Asbestos dust is a risk to health. To reduce dust levels:

- use hand tools – NOT power tools or abrasive cutting discs
- do not sand the surface of asbestos-cement products when dry as this will release a lot of dust
- wet the material to reduce the release of dust when sanding and cutting (Do not use high-pressure water jets to wet the area.)
- add detergent to the water to help soak asbestos-containing material
- when cleaning down asbestos-cement roofing or cladding, use a low-pressure water system and a soft brush
- NEVER use water blasting to clean an asbestos-cement surface
- NEVER use any abrasive methods, such as sanding
- clean up the area thoroughly and dispose of asbestos waste (see page 10).

Sealing or encapsulation asbestos-containing material

- Prepare yourself and the area by following the checklist described under Prepare yourself and the area thoroughly (see page 5).
- Before sealing or encapsulating, vacuum clean the surface of loose asbestos fibres. Use a vacuum cleaner fitted with a HEPA filter and a bag, or wet wipe.
- Water-based PVA paints are the best coatings for cleaned asbestos-cement surfaces.
- Several coatings may be needed for full protection. Apply with a dry airless spray, using low pressure.
- Do not disturb the surface during application as this will release asbestos dust.
- Clean the area and dispose of any waste (see page 10).

We recommend that you use a WorkSafe New Zealand licensed asbestos removalist for this work, particularly if the material is crumbly. Sealing asbestos-containing material is not suitable if the asbestos is:

- severely damaged
- not firmly attached to the wall or ceiling
- in a place where it is constantly disturbed (eg, by bumping into it).

Remember – asbestos-cement roofing breaks easily, and you could fall through when walking on it. It will be slippery when wet.

Removing asbestos sheets

- Before you begin any work with asbestos, follow the checklist: Prepare yourself and the area thoroughly (see page 5).
- Wet asbestos sheets at all times to reduce the release of dust. Do not use high-pressure jets to wet the area.
- Sheets should be taken off intact if possible.
- Lower sheets to the ground (not dropped) as they break easily. This prevents the release of dust contaminating the ground.
- Stack sheets carefully without sliding one sheet over another.
- Wrap stacked sheets in plastic.
- Remove the sheets and other waste as soon as possible in bins or covered loads on a truck or trailer.
- Clean the area and dispose of waste (see page 10).

Do not re-use old asbestos-cement sheets as this is not safe. The Health and Safety at Work (Asbestos) Regulations 2016 prohibits work involving the reuse of asbestos sheeting.

Removing asbestos-containing textured ceilings

Removing textured ceilings needs very careful control measures. The dust is dangerous, and you do not want it to enter other areas of your home.

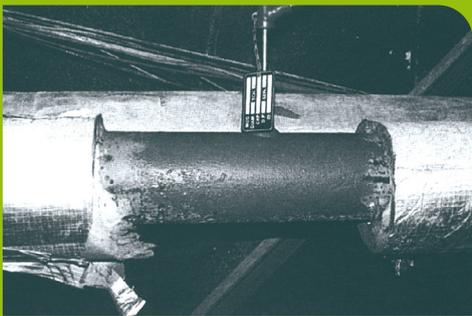
There are two ways to safely remove textured ceilings. One is to remove the plasterboard or other substrate to which the finish is attached. The other is to scrape off the textured finish while retaining the substrate.

- Before you begin any work with asbestos, follow the checklist: Prepare yourself and the area thoroughly (see page 5).
- Using a water-spraying unit, thoroughly wet the ceiling – allowing time for water to soak the material. This will stop dust from being released. Adding detergent to the water will help saturate the asbestos-containing material.
- Scrape the material from the ceiling, making sure that as little as possible falls on you.
- Ensure that the asbestos-containing material is kept wet at all times.
- Bag the asbestos or other waste as you work.
- Clean the area and dispose of waste (see page 10).

Removing insulating material containing asbestos

As most insulation material tends to be friable, we recommend that you talk to a licensed asbestos removalist, or to your health protection officer, before you do anything. Enclosing or encapsulating the material is sometimes recommended, rather than removal.

Friable asbestos should only be removed by a WorkSafe New Zealand licensed asbestos removalist.



Removing other asbestos-containing material

- Before you begin any work with asbestos, follow the checklist: Prepare yourself and the area thoroughly (see page 5).
- Only remove asbestos-backed floor tiles or vinyl sheeting with unpowered hand tools so dust is not created.
- If the asbestos is covered by an outer layer, you will need to cut through this layer to allow total wetting. Use water to wet the compound.
- If sanding the surface for removal, or preparing the surface for replacement, keep the surface wet at all times to reduce the release of dust.
- Clean the area and dispose of waste (see page 10).

We recommend that you use a WorkSafe New Zealand licensed asbestos removalist to remove asbestos-containing material if there is wire, cladding, paint or plastic covering the asbestos-containing material as the process or removal is likely to be difficult. Incorrect removal is likely to release asbestos fibres, which are a risk to health.



Weathered asbestos roofing

Managing asbestos in soil

Contaminated soil may be removed to eliminate the risk if fibres become airborne and are inhaled, or it may be covered to a level where it will not be disturbed by gardening, site works, or other activities in your home.

If there are small amounts of asbestos present that you decide to remove yourself:

- make sure you follow the checklist: Prepare yourself and the area thoroughly (see page 5).
- clear the surface of any visible asbestos-containing material and, depending on the land use, cover any low level contamination with a layer

of uncontaminated soil or a hard surface to a level where it will not be disturbed by gardening, site works or other activities around your home.

However, burying asbestos-contaminated soil needs to be supervised by a contaminated land practitioner and the burial location must be recorded on the territorial authority and regional council records.

If you believe there is a high level of asbestos contamination, we recommend you seek advice from your territorial authority or a contaminated land practitioner.



Disposing of asbestos waste and cleaning up afterwards

After working with asbestos-containing material, clean up the work area thoroughly.

- a. Wipe down any exposed surface with a damp cloth to collect dust. These cloths should only be used once and be disposed of with other asbestos waste.
- b. Gather up all scraps and off-cuts and place these in heavy-duty plastic bags for disposal.
- c. Use heavy-duty polyethylene bags specially designed for asbestos waste. You can buy these from any asbestos removal company. Do not use ordinary rubbish bags. The bags should be marked CONTAINS ASBESTOS WASTE. Do not allow waste to build up in the work areas. Bags should be only half-filled because of the risk of tearing.
- d. Put any thick asbestos slurry in a tightly-sealed container and dispose of in the asbestos waste bag.
- e. Dispose of polyethylene covering, tape, etc in the waste bag.
- f. Fasten all waste bags securely with a goose neck and adhesive tape. Ensure that all bags are clearly labelled CONTAINS ASBESTOS WASTE.
- g. Dispose of asbestos waste bags at an approved landfill. Your local authority can advise on approved sites in your area. WorkSafe's asbestos webpage has more information (www.worksafe.govt.nz/topic-and-industry/asbestos).
- h. Vacuum the area using a vacuum cleaner fitted with a HEPA filter and a bag. Dispose of the vacuum cleaner bag in the asbestos waste bag.
- i. Remove protective gear carefully and dispose of it in waste bags after work is completed, and the area cleared.
- j. Open windows to ventilate the area if indoors.
- k. Turn on electricity.
- l. Shower straight away after working with asbestos and clearing up.
- m. When the job is completed, contact your local health protection officer for advice on how to check that the area has been cleared of asbestos dust.

It is far safer to use a WorkSafe New Zealand licensed asbestos removalist to remove asbestos-containing material from your home, as they are fully trained and fully equipped to do this work safely.

For more information

- Contact a health protection officer at Te Whatu Ora National Public Health Service for further information about asbestos, how to identify it, how to handle and safely remove it, protective equipment and disposal procedures (www.tewhatoru.govt.nz/public-health-contacts/).
- For information on the adverse health effects of asbestos, and how to identify asbestos-containing material in your home, read Te Whatu Ora booklet *All about Asbestos* available from Te Whatu Ora website tewhatoru.govt.nz.
- You can also refer to the *Approved Code of Practice: Management and Removal of Asbestos*, at: www.worksafe.govt.nz/topic-and-industry/asbestos/management-and-removal-of-asbestos/

**Don't take risks with asbestos.
If in doubt, seek advice.**