

What is Asbestos?

Asbestos is a naturally occurring fibrous silicate mineral. It was used extensively in building products in Western Australia from the mid-1940s to late 1980s. Although no longer used, there is still a widespread presence of asbestos in the community.

It is a known carcinogen but only poses a health risk if fibres become airborne and are inhaled into our lungs. If inhaled, it can cause life threatening diseases, including lung cancer, pleural disease, asbestosis and mesothelioma. The level of exposure required to develop each of these diseases varies, however the risk of developing an asbestos-related disease with exposure levels the public may experience is extremely low. If left undisturbed asbestos generally does not pose a health risk.

Since the ban of asbestos in Australia in December 2003, it has been important for residents and local business owners to prevent asbestos fibres from entering the air when moving, exposing or disposing of any material containing asbestos.

Where is Asbestos Found?

Properties built before 1987 are more than likely to have building materials containing asbestos. Asbestos was commonly mixed in cement or woven into fabric and used for insulation purposes.

Common places asbestos can be found include:

- Fibro sheets
- Downpipes and gutters
- Ceiling, floor, boiler or oven insulation
- Roof and floor tiles
- Flooring adhesives
- Soundproofing materials
- Plaster and joint compounds
- Plastics in paints and adhesives
- Casings for electrical wires
- Dog kennels
- Garages and sheds
- Kitchen splashbacks
- Flues to fireplaces
- Fences
- Carpet underlay

Is a Licence Contractor Required?

Removal of any amount of friable asbestos must be done by a person or business with a Class A asbestos removal licence.

More than 10 square metres of non-friable asbestos containing material must be removed by a licensed and trained individual or business with either a Class A or Class B asbestos removal licence.

Ten square metres or less of bonded (non-friable) asbestos can be removed without a licence.

You can search for a contractor with a Restricted Asbestos Licence on the [Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety website](#).

What is Friable Asbestos?

Friable asbestos means any material that contains asbestos and is in the form of a powder or can be easily crumbled or reduced to a powder by hand pressure when dry. Examples of friable asbestos include, but are not limited to, asbestos lagging, sprayed insulation, millboard, low density fibre board (LDFB), paper backing to vinyl sheeting, internal cores to fire doors, felt and woven asbestos textiles and matting.

Non-friable asbestos means any asbestos-containing material (ACM) other than friable asbestos. Examples of non-friable asbestos include, but are not limited to, asbestos cement building products e.g. roof and fence sheeting, vinyl floor tiles, friction materials, and any product where the asbestos is 'bound' in a matrix.

Removing Asbestos

Renovators are encouraged to get licensed professionals to help remove and dispose of asbestos, but if you intend to remove asbestos yourself then remember to:

- Get any suspected material tested to see if it does contain asbestos
- Wet the surface of asbestos material down with a low pressure hose before commencing work to prevent blowing asbestos fibres into the air
- Do not use power tools on any asbestos material
- Try and keep the asbestos in one piece
- If you need to break any asbestos sheets make sure the surfaces are very wet, to reduce the likelihood of fibres being released into the air
- Wear suitable personal protective clothing - disposable coveralls and gloves are best
- Wear a P1 or P2 respirator so you don't inhale any fibres
- Wash your hands and shower after handling asbestos cement products
- Dispose of asbestos material at an approved landfill site

Important note: If you choose to do the work yourself, you are only authorised to remove up to 10 square meters of asbestos.

Anyone handling or disposing asbestos needs to comply with the requirements of the [Health \(Asbestos\) Regulations 1992](#).

Disposing of Asbestos

It is recommended you engage a licensed asbestos contractor to dispose of asbestos, but if you are disposing it yourself you will need to ensure:

- Asbestos material is separated from other material and wrapped in heavy duty plastic sheeting and taped shut.
- The asbestos sheeting is kept damp while wrapping it.
- The sheeting must then be labelled clearly with 'Caution Asbestos' on the front.

All asbestos material must be disposed of at a landfill or waste disposal site licensed by the Department of Water and Environment Regulation. Not all landfill sites accept asbestos.

For more information about licensed landfill disposal sites near you, you can also use the search tool on the [Federal Government's Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency website](#).

This information sheet is intended as a guide only. The Shire disclaims any liability for any damages sustained by a person acting on the basis of this information.

For further information contact **Development Services** on **(08) 9080 2111**.