



Asbestos in the home

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CONTENTS

1.0	About this information	2
	What is this information about?	2
	Key words used in this document	2
	Your duties under the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015	2
	Residential landlords	2
	The role of WorkSafe New Zealand	3
	More information about asbestos in Aotearoa New Zealand and asbestos legislation	3

2.0	What is asbestos?	4
	What is asbestos?	4
	Types of asbestos	4
	What problems can asbestos cause?	4

3.0	Identifying asbestos in your home	5
	You cannot tell if something contains asbestos just by looking at it	5
	Where you could find asbestos in your home	5
	Always check for asbestos before you start doing any work in your home or on your property	8

4.0	What to do if you find or suspect asbestos	9
	Do not disturb asbestos materials	9
	Tell other people in your home	9
	Contact a reputable asbestos contractor	9
	Plan to manage asbestos materials safely	10
	What to do if you accidentally disturb asbestos	10
	What to do if you have been exposed to asbestos	10

5.0 Asbestos contractors 11

Types of asbestos contractors	11
What you should tell your asbestos contractor	12
Choosing an asbestos contractor	12
What you should receive from an asbestos contractor	13
Doing work on asbestos by yourself	14
Disposing of asbestos waste	14

6.0 Asbestos material disturbed by damage to your home or property 15

Being prepared for damage to your home	15
What to do if your home is damaged and asbestos material is disturbed	16
What to do if you cannot avoid going into an area contaminated with asbestos fibres	16
Decontaminating yourself when you have been in an area contaminated with asbestos fibres	17

7.0 More information 18

The National Public Health Service	18
Other information	18

tables

1	Some of the areas where asbestos can be found in homes or on properties	6
2	Asbestos industry contractors that might be involved with managing asbestos in the home or on your property	11
3	Examples of equipment to keep in an emergency kit to prepare for damage to your home or on your property	15

figures

1	Areas where asbestos is commonly found in homes or on properties	7
2	What to do if you find or suspect asbestos	9

1.0

About this information

What is this information about?

This information provides advice about what homeowners or residential tenants should do if they think there could be asbestos in their home or on their property.

This information is for anyone that might have asbestos in their home or on their property. It might also be useful for:

- residential landlords
- anyone that carries out asbestos surveys, removal, or assessment work
- anyone that provides health and safety advice about asbestos.

Key words used in this document

In this document:

- 'You' means anyone living in a home or on a property that might have asbestos (for example, a homeowner or a tenant).
- 'Contractor' means an individual or business that provides goods or services. This includes any individual or business hired to identify, manage, or work on asbestos material in your home or on your property (for example, asbestos surveyors, asbestos removalists, asbestos assessors, and other tradespeople).

Your duties under the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015

If you pay someone to undertake work on asbestos in your home or on your property, it becomes a 'workplace' for the duration of the work. Under the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 (HSWA), you will be an 'other person at the workplace'.

You must take reasonable care for your own health and safety and make sure you do not put others at risk by your actions or inactions. You must also follow any reasonable instructions from the businesses doing the work.

You can read more about other persons at the workplace on the WorkSafe website [What to know about 'other persons' at work](#)

Residential landlords

Under HSWA, residential landlords must make sure that work carried out at their property is done safely.

If there is a risk that workers or other people (including tenants) could be exposed to asbestos fibres when work is carried out, residential landlords must:

- identify the asbestos in their home or on their property, and
- prepare an asbestos management plan for work that has a risk of exposure to asbestos.

This duty applies when the work is being carried out. It applies to:

- any area where work is carried out that could create a risk of exposure to asbestos fibres, and
- any access route for the area where work is carried out.

You can read more about the duties residential landlord have to manage asbestos on the WorkSafe website [Policy clarification: Residential landlords and asbestos](#)

The role of WorkSafe New Zealand

WorkSafe is New Zealand's primary work health and safety regulator.

WorkSafe aims to make sure that every New Zealander that goes to work comes home healthy and safe.

WorkSafe influences in three key ways:

- **Engage:** Helping businesses and workers to understand how to meet their responsibilities to ensure work is healthy and safe (including, for example, by producing guidance documents).
- **Enforce:** Taking action against those who fail to meet their responsibilities to ensure work is healthy and safe.
- **Permit:** Allowing businesses and individuals to carry out high-risk work activities that require permission to do so.

One of WorkSafe's roles is to regulate asbestos in the workplace. The workplace includes your home or property when work or repairs are done by a contractor.

You can read more about WorkSafe's role on the WorkSafe website [WorkSafe's role as a regulator](#)

More information about asbestos in Aotearoa New Zealand and asbestos legislation

For more information about the health risks of asbestos and the history of asbestos management in Aotearoa see our quick guide [Asbestos in Aotearoa New Zealand](#)

2.0

What is asbestos?

What is asbestos?

Asbestos is a heat-resistant, fire-resistant, and insulating mineral that was commonly used in building materials.

Asbestos is made up of tiny fibres. When asbestos is disturbed or breaks down, asbestos fibres can be released into the air.

All forms of asbestos are harmful to humans.

Types of asbestos

Asbestos can be classified into two categories based on its condition:

- **Friable asbestos** is flaky or powdery. It can be crumbled or reduced to a powder without much pressure. Friable asbestos can easily release fibres into the air.
Friable asbestos is often called **Class A** asbestos.
- **Non-friable asbestos** usually has asbestos fibres bonded into another material such as cement. Non-friable asbestos is less likely to release asbestos fibres into the air unless it is disturbed or has started to deteriorate.
Non-friable asbestos is often called **Class B** asbestos.

Airborne asbestos fibres are too small to be seen with the naked eye. Even if you cannot see any dust particles in the air, asbestos fibres may still be present.

What problems can asbestos cause?

When asbestos fibres are released into the air, they can be breathed in easily. Breathing in asbestos fibres can cause them to get trapped in your lungs, leading to serious health issues.

Asbestos fibres in the lungs cause several diseases, including:

- cancers (for example, lung cancer and mesothelioma)
- serious long-term lung conditions (for example, asbestosis).

Diseases caused by asbestos often cannot be cured. They can cause severe symptoms and can be life-threatening.

You can read more about the diseases that can be caused by asbestos fibres on the WorkSafe website [Asbestos in New Zealand](#)

Even a single exposure to asbestos fibres, especially in high concentrations, can cause serious health problems later in life.

3.0

Identifying asbestos in your home

You cannot tell if something contains asbestos just by looking at it

It is very difficult to tell the difference between building materials that contain asbestos and building materials that do not. For example, cement that contains asbestos can look identical to cement that does not contain asbestos.

The only way to confirm that something is asbestos is to test a sample of it. Asbestos sampling should only be done by a reputable contractor.

You can find information on finding a reputable contractor in [Section 5.0 Asbestos contractors](#)

Where you could find asbestos in your home

Many buildings in Aotearoa New Zealand have asbestos in them.

If your home was built before 1 January 2000, it may contain some asbestos materials.

For homes built after 1 January 2000, the risk of asbestos material being present is lower.

Table 1 and Figure 1 show some of the areas where asbestos can be found in the home or on a property.

Textured ceilings	Asbestos was often used in textured ceilings (for example, Glamatex or Whisper) for soundproofing and fire-resistance.
Wall and ceiling panels and sheeting	Asbestos cement (for example, Fibrolite) was commonly used in wet areas like kitchens, bathrooms, toilets, and laundry areas.
Backing for wall tiles and splashbacks	Asbestos can sometimes be found in the backing material of wall tiles, bath panels, and splashbacks in kitchens and bathrooms.
Carpet underlay	Some older carpet underlays may contain asbestos fibres.
Patching compounds and textured paint	Asbestos was sometimes used in patching compounds and textured paints for durability and fire-resistance.
Vinyl floor tiles	Asbestos can sometimes be found in vinyl floor tiles and in the adhesive used under the tiles.
Linoleum and vinyl floor coverings (sheets)	Asbestos paper was used in the backing of vinyl and linoleum floor coverings. It can also be found in the adhesive used under vinyl and linoleum sheets.
Poured flooring	Some types of older poured flooring can contain asbestos.
Insulation	Asbestos was used for insulation in heaters, fireplaces, stoves, roof cavities, and around hot water pipes because of its heat-resistance.
Roof sheeting and ridge capping	Asbestos cement was often used in roof sheeting and ridge capping for its durability and weather-resistance.
Gutters, downpipes, gables, and eaves	Asbestos can sometimes be found in gutters, downpipes, gables, and eaves (including the lining under eaves).
Electrical switchboards	Older electrical switchboards may contain asbestos as an insulating material.
Water pipes and flues	Asbestos was used to make and insulate water pipes. It was also used to insulate flues because it is resistant to heat.
Cladding	Asbestos can be found in some cladding materials for walls, including imitation brick cladding.
Fencing, carports, garages, outhouses, and garden sheds	Asbestos cement was often used in the construction of fences, carports, garages, outhouses, and garden sheds because it is durable and weather-resistant.

TABLE 1:
Some of the areas where asbestos can be found in homes or on properties

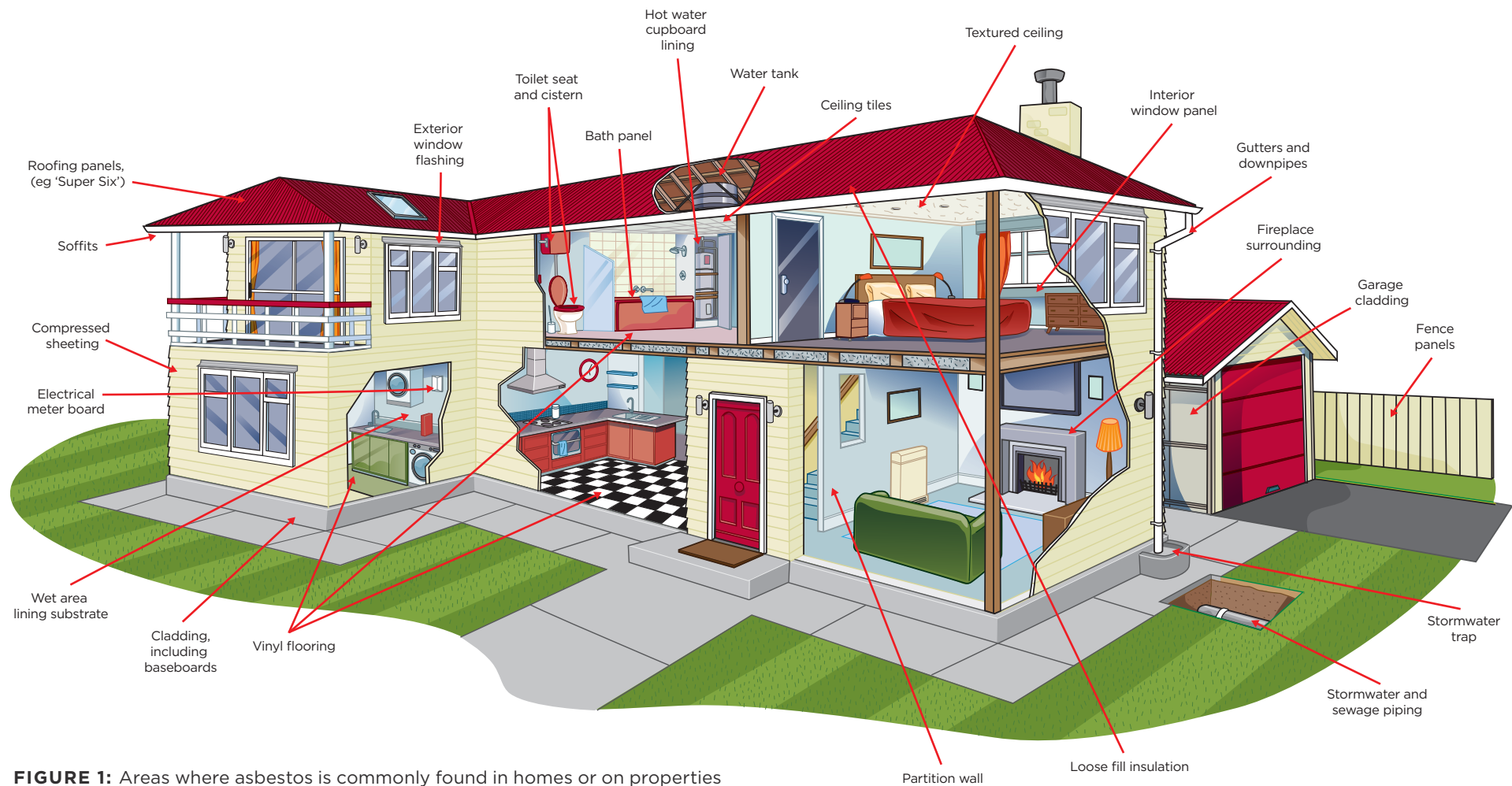


FIGURE 1: Areas where asbestos is commonly found in homes or on properties

Always check for asbestos before you start doing any work in your home or on your property

Asbestos fibres can be released into the air by many different types of work. This includes large jobs such as demolition, relocation and refurbishment, and small jobs like minor repairs and maintenance.

If you find asbestos, or suspect something might be asbestos, do not disturb it in any way. Contact a reputable asbestos contractor – they can help you to manage it safely.

You can find information on finding a reputable contractor in [Section 5.0 Asbestos contractors](#)

If you are not sure if something contains asbestos, treat it as if it is asbestos.

4.0

What to do if you find or suspect asbestos

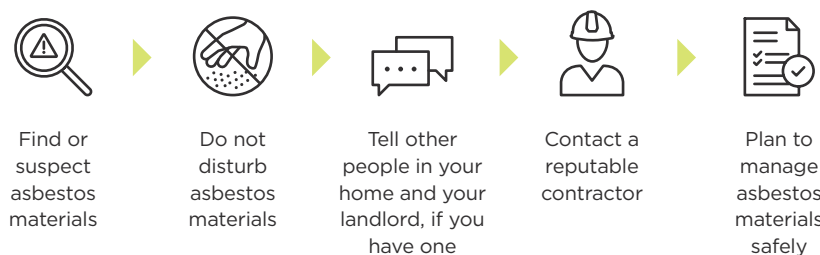


FIGURE 2:
What to do if you find or suspect asbestos

Do not disturb asbestos materials

The risk of harm from asbestos depends on its condition and how easily fibres are released into the air.

Asbestos fibres are more likely to be released into the air if asbestos materials are:

- friable (flaky, powdery, or easy to crumble)
- in poor condition (for example, if they are flaking, peeling, or crumbling)
- disturbed in any way (for example, sanded, drilled, cut, or water blasted).

Non-friable (or bonded) asbestos materials generally do not release asbestos fibres if they are in good condition and are not disturbed.

Tell other people in your home

If you think that material in your home or on your property could be asbestos, tell the people you live with about it. If you are living in a rented property, tell your landlord about it.

You may also need to tell people who visit your home about it. Everyone should stay away from the area to avoid disturbing the suspected asbestos material.

You should take extra precautions to make sure that children and pets are kept away from the area.

Contact a reputable asbestos contractor

A reputable asbestos contractor (for example, an asbestos surveyor experienced in identifying asbestos material) can help to confirm whether a material is asbestos and assess the risk.

If you find or suspect asbestos is in your home or on your property:

- contact a reputable asbestos contractor for advice, or

- contact the National Public Health Service. Contact information for your nearest public health office is available on the [Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora](#) website.

You can find information on finding a reputable contractor in [Section 5.0 Asbestos contractors](#)

Plan to manage asbestos materials safely

If material in your home or on your property is confirmed to be asbestos, you will need to decide how to manage it. The best way to manage asbestos material in your home or on your property will depend on several factors, including:

- how much asbestos material is present
- what condition the asbestos material is in
- where the asbestos material is and how easy it is to access
- whether work needs to be done on or near the asbestos material (for example, maintenance).

A reputable asbestos contractor can give you information about the best way to manage the asbestos in your home or on your property.

What to do if you accidentally disturb asbestos

If you accidentally disturb asbestos, follow the steps below.

1 Stop what you are doing

- Disturbing the asbestos further will cause more fibres to be released into the air.
- Tell other people in the area what has happened. Keep other people and pets out of the area.

2 Minimise the spread of fibres

- Leave the area where the asbestos has been disturbed.
- Seal off the area by making sure doors and windows are closed.
- Wipe yourself down carefully with damp rags. Do not rub yourself down with a brush or with your hands.

3 Remove contaminated clothing

- Remove the top layer of your clothes, turning them inside out if possible. Do not shake them.
- Put the clothes and any used damp rags into a plastic bag and tie it up. Put the plastic bag into another plastic bag and seal it up with duct tape.

4 Contact a reputable asbestos contractor

- Contact a reputable asbestos contractor or your local health protection officer. Tell them what has happened and ask them how to dispose of the contaminated clothes and rags.
- Do not re-enter the area where asbestos has been disturbed until you have been told it is safe.

What to do if you have been exposed to asbestos

The health problems caused by asbestos take many years to develop. It is very unlikely that you will quickly become sick from asbestos after being exposed to it.

If you think you have been exposed to asbestos, or if you are told you have been exposed, tell your local GP at your next regular appointment

5.0

Asbestos contractors

Types of asbestos contractors

Contractors have duties to make sure you are not exposed to asbestos while they are doing work in your home.

Hiring an asbestos contractor is the safest way to help manage any asbestos found in your home.

Asbestos contractors often work in specific areas of asbestos management. If you need to manage asbestos material in your home, you may come across one or more of the asbestos contractors in Table 2.

ASBESTOS CONTRACTOR	WHAT THEY DO
Asbestos surveyors	Asbestos surveyors are trained to identify asbestos. You should expect an asbestos surveyor to: - gather information about your home (for example, when it was built) - carry out a visual inspection of the building and any areas of suspected asbestos - take samples of suspected asbestos materials - provide you with a report of their findings.
Asbestos removalists	Asbestos removalists are trained to safely remove and dispose of asbestos. You should expect an asbestos removalist to: - assess the work that needs to be done (for example, the type, amount, and location of asbestos materials) using the surveyor report - make an asbestos removal control plan (ARCP) that explains the removal process and the health and safety measures that they will use - contact your neighbours to let them know that asbestos removal work will be taking place - follow strict health and safety procedures and use specialised equipment to remove asbestos materials without releasing large amounts of harmful fibres into the air - correctly dispose of asbestos waste.
Asbestos assessors	Asbestos assessors are trained to make sure that asbestos removal work has been completed to the required standard. You should expect an asbestos assessor to: - be from a different business to the asbestos removalist (that is, they should be independent) - review the asbestos removal control plan made by the asbestos removalist to make sure it is safe and suitable before work starts - inspect the area where asbestos material was removed from - collect samples of the air to test for asbestos fibres - confirm in writing that the area is safe to re-enter.

TABLE 2: Asbestos industry contractors that might be involved with managing asbestos in the home or on your property

What you should tell your asbestos contractor

When you contact an asbestos contractor, they will likely ask you questions about your home and any asbestos material you may have found.

Try to be prepared with as much information about your home as possible. This can help the asbestos contractor to understand your situation and plan the work that needs to be done.

It can be helpful if you take photos of any suspected asbestos, but only if you can do so without disturbing it.

Questions that an asbestos contractor might ask you include:

- When was your home built?
- Have there been any renovations, refurbishments, or extensions?
When were they built?
- Where have you found suspected asbestos material?
- What does the suspected asbestos material look like?
- Roughly how much suspected asbestos material can you see?
- What condition is the suspected asbestos material in?
- Is there anything blocking the area that could make accessing the suspected asbestos material difficult?
- Are there any parking restrictions, entry restrictions, or obstacles that could affect access to your home?

Choosing an asbestos contractor

Take the time to choose a reputable asbestos contractor that you are comfortable with and that can do the job well.

Hiring a reputable asbestos contractor can help to make sure that work on asbestos in your home or on your property is done safely and to a high standard.

A reputable asbestos contractor should act with integrity and do their work in a way that shows professionalism and care to their workers and other people.

When you are choosing a contractor for work on asbestos in your home or on your property, think about the following:

Experience and qualifications

- A reputable asbestos contractor will be experienced in carrying out work on asbestos effectively and in a healthy and safe way. They should be able to tell you about the experience they have doing similar work.
- A reputable asbestos contractor should also be able to provide you with information about the qualifications of their workers.

Licensing

- Depending on the type of work that needs to be done, asbestos removalists and asbestos assessors may need to be licensed by WorkSafe.
- You can search the [Licence holder register](#) on the WorkSafe website to verify the licensing of assessors and removalist

Reviews and references

- A reputable asbestos contractor should be able to provide you with reviews, testimonials, or references from other customers. This should help you to understand the quality of their work and how professional they are.
- You can also search for reviews online to see what other people have experienced when they have hired the contractor.

Insurance

- A reputable asbestos contractor should be able to provide you with details about their public liability and indemnity insurance.

Cost

- Cost is an important factor, but it should not be the only thing you consider when you are choosing an asbestos contractor. A contractor that offers the lowest price may not necessarily provide the highest quality service.
- Look for a contractor that offers a good balance of cost and quality. Getting multiple quotes can help you spot rates that are unusually high or low.

What you should receive from an asbestos contractor

An asbestos contractor should provide you with all the information you need to decide whether to go ahead with the work.

The asbestos contractor should give you this information in writing as a formal quote or work plan.

A formal quote or work plan should include details about:

- what work will be done
- any tests or inspections that need to be done
- how long the work will take
- how much the work will cost
- any warranties or guarantees that will cover the work and materials
- what health and safety measures will be used to protect you and any workers in your home or on your property
- what disruptions there will be to your living space while the work is going on.

You should also expect an asbestos contractor to carry out a risk assessment before starting work. Depending on the type of work that needs to be done, this may include an asbestos survey.

The quote you receive from your asbestos contractor may highlight work that needs to be done by other tradespeople.

This means you might need to hire other tradespeople for parts of the job.

Consider this when you are thinking about the cost of the work.

Doing work on asbestos by yourself

WorkSafe strongly recommends that you get advice from a reputable asbestos contractor if you need to remove or work on any asbestos material in your home.

If you have no option but to do the work yourself, you should follow safe work practices to minimise the risk of harm to yourself and other people in your home.

Attempting to remove or work on asbestos materials without specialist training is extremely dangerous. It can create a major health hazard for you and others in your home.

Working on asbestos materials without proper training can cause problems that might be very expensive to fix. It can also put tradespeople at risk of exposure to asbestos.

It can be safer and more cost effective to hire an asbestos contractor from the start.

You can find out more about safe work practices when dealing with asbestos in your home on the [Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora](#) website.

Disposing of asbestos waste

Asbestos waste needs to be disposed of at an authorised disposal site. If you hire an asbestos contractor, they will dispose of asbestos waste for you.

If you choose to do work on asbestos yourself, you will need to dispose of any asbestos waste safely.

Before removing any asbestos, talk to your local council to find out:

- where to find a tip (rubbish dump) that accepts asbestos waste, and
- how to transport your asbestos waste to the tip.

We recommend that you call your local council several days ahead to let them know that you are disposing of asbestos waste, so they can prepare.

Never attempt to burn asbestos material or dump asbestos waste in normal council waste bins.

6.0

Asbestos material disturbed by damage to your home or property

Asbestos material can be disturbed if your home or property is damaged by a or a natural disaster (for example, a flood, fire, earthquake, landslide, or cyclone).

Asbestos materials may also be disturbed by other types of damage, such as vandalism, burst pipes, and leaks.

Asbestos fibres may be present in dust, ash, and rubble after a damaging event.

Asbestos fibres can also be released into the air by activities after a damaging event (for example, while moving rubble and searching for lost belongings).

Being prepared for damage to your home

If you know there is asbestos material in your home or on your property, you should keep equipment in your emergency kit to help keep yourself and others safe if there is a damaging event.

Some examples of equipment that you could include in your emergency kit are outlined in Table 3.

EQUIPMENT	WHAT IT IS FOR?
Disposable P3 or N95 face mask	Minimise the number of asbestos fibres that you inhale.
Disposable protective clothing	Minimise the number of asbestos fibres that get stuck to your clothes, shoes, body, and hair. This should include: - disposable coveralls (ideally Type 5, Category 3) - disposable boot covers - disposable gloves - protective eyewear.
Wet wipes	To wipe dust from yourself and surfaces.
Disposable cloths	To wipe dust from yourself and surfaces.
Bucket	To fill with water for wetting disposable cloths.
Water sprayer	For wetting down asbestos material.
Detergent (for example, dishwashing liquid)	To add to your water sprayer for wetting down asbestos material.

EQUIPMENT	WHAT IT IS FOR?
Thick plastic disposal bags	For containing asbestos waste material for disposal, including: - asbestos material that has been removed - contaminated clothing (disposable protective clothing, underclothes, and anything that cannot be easily wiped clean) - used face masks - used wet wipes and cloths.
Duct tape	For sealing plastic disposal bags.

TABLE 3: Examples of equipment to keep in an emergency kit to prepare for damage to your home or on your property

Keep the instructions for any equipment in your emergency kit. If you need to use the equipment, follow the instructions carefully.

You can find out more about safe practices when dealing with asbestos in your home on the [Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora](#) website.

What to do if your home is damaged and asbestos material is disturbed

If asbestos materials have been disturbed in your home or on your property after a damaging event, avoid going into the area if possible.

- Follow the instructions given by emergency or clean-up professionals.
- Tell other people in the area that asbestos materials have been disturbed.
- Seal off the contaminated area if possible.
- Contact a reputable asbestos contractor for advice.

What to do if you cannot avoid going into an area contaminated with asbestos fibres

If it is not possible to avoid going into an area that has been contaminated with asbestos fibres:

- wear old clothes that you can easily dispose of, and
- wear personal protective equipment (PPE) over the top of your old clothes. Follow the instructions provided with your PPE and put it on in the following order:
 - disposable coveralls
 - footwear
 - disposable boot covers
 - disposable gloves
 - disposable P3 or N95 mask
 - protective eyewear.

Decontaminating yourself when you have been in an area contaminated with asbestos fibres

If you have been in an area that you think has been contaminated with asbestos fibres, it is important that you carry out a personal decontamination.

What is personal decontamination?

'Personal decontamination' is the process of removing asbestos dust and residue from your protective equipment.

It helps to prevent asbestos fibres from spreading to areas that are not contaminated.

Always follow the instructions of emergency or clean-up professionals, or your asbestos contractor.

If there is no-one available to instruct you, use the following procedure:

- Open up a thick plastic bag.
- Remove any visible asbestos dust from your protective clothing using a clean wet wipe or damp cloth. Place used wipes and cloths into the thick plastic bag.
- Carefully remove disposable boot covers, disposable gloves, and disposable coveralls. Place them into the thick plastic bag.
- Wipe down your footwear using a clean wet wipe or damp cloth. Place used wipes and cloths into the thick plastic bag.
- Wipe down the outside of any thick plastic bags you have used. Place used wipes and cloths into the thick plastic bag.
- Remove your mask and place it into the thick plastic bag.
- Seal the thick plastic bag using duct tape.
- Place the sealed bag into another thick plastic bag. Seal this thick plastic bag with duct tape.
- Remove your clothing, being careful not to shake it. Place your clothing into a new thick plastic bag and seal with duct tape.
- Place the sealed bag into another thick plastic bag. Seal the bag with duct tape.
- Write clearly on the outside of the bag that it contains asbestos.
- Wash your hands, nails, and face with soapy water.
- Shower and wash your hair.

7.0

More information

The National Public Health Service

The National Public Health Service is part of Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora.

It plays an important part in assessing the risk to public health from asbestos exposure in non-work settings.

The National Public Health Service:

- responds to complaints about asbestos-containing material
- responds to emergencies that involve asbestos-containing material (for example, fires)
- publishes advice for the public on how to avoid exposure from asbestos.

The National Public Health Service has access to specialist advice and testing for asbestos in a non-work environment and works with other agencies to respond to asbestos issues.

Other information

WorkSafe information

[WorkSafe's role as a regulator](#)

[Policy clarification: Residential landlords and asbestos](#)

[Policy clarification: Information for people building a house or working on their own home](#)

[Licence holder register](#)

[Asbestos exposure registration](#)

Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora information

[Asbestos](#)

[National Public Health Service](#)

[Public Health Contacts](#)

Industry bodies

[Faculty of Asbestos Management of Australia & New Zealand](#)

[New Zealand Demolition & Asbestos Association](#)

[International Accreditation New Zealand](#)

[National Association of Testing Authorities](#)

Disclaimer

This publication provides general guidance. It is not possible for WorkSafe to address every situation that could occur in every workplace. This means that you will need to think about this guidance and how to apply it to your particular circumstances.

WorkSafe regularly reviews and revises guidance to ensure that it is up-to-date. If you are reading a printed copy of this guidance, please check worksafe.govt.nz to confirm that your copy is the current version.

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