

# Removing Asbestos from the Home

## Read this booklet for:

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



# How to get ACM removed from your house

Working with asbestos or asbestos-containing material (ACM) can be a danger to health. Special gear should be used, and special care taken.

The Ministry of Health advises that you use Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) certified contractors to perform restricted work with asbestos. This is because asbestos fibres are a risk to health when inhaled. Safe removal methods are well known to experienced specialist firms.

ACM may be found in:

- textured ceilings and linings
- asbestos cement sheeting or cladding
- asbestos-backed floor covering.

For information on the adverse health effects of asbestos, and how to identify ACM in your home, read the Ministry of Health booklet *All about Asbestos* (code HE7021) available from the public health unit of your local District Health Board (DHB). You can also read the *New Zealand Guidelines for the Management and Removal of Asbestos* at [www.osh.govt.nz/publications/booklets/asbestos-management-removal/index.asp](http://www.osh.govt.nz/publications/booklets/asbestos-management-removal/index.asp)

Do not risk your health or the health of other people by incorrect or unnecessary removal of asbestos. If you do intend to remove asbestos yourself, 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 ACM, use the following checklist

- a. Clear the area and surroundings of people and pets. Children and animals must be unable to enter the area.
- b. Clear the area of any removable objects, including furniture.
- c. Line all other surfaces (ie, floors, walls, fixtures) with polyethylene film fastened with strong adhesive tape.
- d. Place clear warning signs to keep people away.
- e. Fasten all windows and doors if working inside, and seal around them with tape.
- f. Turn off electricity.
- g. Cover electrical circuits and close air conditioning or ventilation systems.
- h. Wear disposable overalls (with hood), gloves and shoe coverings to keep dust off your clothes and skin.
- i. Protective clothing and a respiratory mask should be worn at all times until all work has been completed and the area is fully cleaned up.
- j. Use a P1-P2 type dust respirator at all times. Get expert advice on the correct type of respirator from a firm that sells safety equipment.
- k. Wetting the area, using a low-pressure sprayer, lowers dust levels – but **never use a high pressure jet.**
- l. As part of good work practice, do not eat, drink or smoke while working with asbestos.
- m. 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.
- n. Use a vacuum cleaner fitted with a HEPA (High Efficiency Particulate Air) filter.



# Special care to avoid the release of asbestos dust

Asbestos dust is a danger 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.
- Wetting the material reduces the release of dust when sanding and cutting.  
**Do not use high-pressure water jets.**
- Adding detergent to the water will help soak ACM.
- 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 as on page 8.

REMEMBER – asbestos-cement roofing breaks easily and you could fall through when walking on it. It is also slippery when wet.



# Sealing or encapsulation of ACM

- Prepare yourself and the area by following the checklist on page 3.
- Before sealing or encapsulating, clear the surface of loose asbestos fibres by vacuuming. Use a vacuum cleaner fitted with a HEPA filter 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 area and dispose of any waste as on page 8.

The Ministry of Health advises that you use MBIE certified contractors for this work, particularly if the material is crumbly. Sealing ACM is not suitable if it is:

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

# Removal of asbestos sheets

When working with asbestos sheets, please note these points.

- Before you begin any work with asbestos, follow the checklist on page 3 for preparing yourself and the surrounding work area.
- Sheets should be wet at all times to reduce release of dust. **Do not use high-pressure jets.**
- Sheets should be taken off intact if possible.
- Sheets should be lowered to the ground (not dropped) as they break easily.
- Sheets should be stacked carefully without sliding one sheet over another.
- Stacked sheets should be wrapped in plastic.
- The asbestos-cement sheets and other waste should be removed as soon as possible in bins or covered loads on a truck or trailer.
- Clean the area and dispose of waste as on page 8.

**NOTE:** Do not re-use old asbestos-cement sheets around the home. In the past, it has been a common practice to use these materials to build fences, but this is not safe. The Health and Safety in Employment (Asbestos) Regulations 1998 prohibit the reuse of asbestos sheeting.

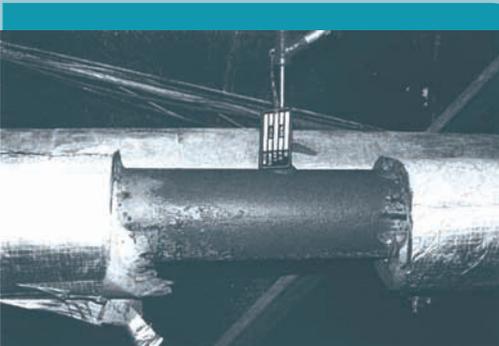
# How to remove asbestos from textured ceilings

The removal of textured ceilings needs very careful control measures. The dust is dangerous and you do not want it to enter other areas of the house.

- Before you begin any work with asbestos, follow the checklist on page 3 for preparing yourself and the surrounding work area.
- 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 saturation of the ACM.
- Scrape the material from the ceiling, taking care that as little as possible falls on you.
- Ensure that the ACM is kept wet at all times.
- Bag the asbestos waste as you work.
- Clean the area and dispose of waste. For full cleaning details see page 8.

## Removal of insulating material containing asbestos

As most insulation material tends to be crumbly, it is recommended that you talk to professional removers, or to your health protection officer, before you do anything. Enclosing or encapsulating the material is sometimes recommended, rather than removal.



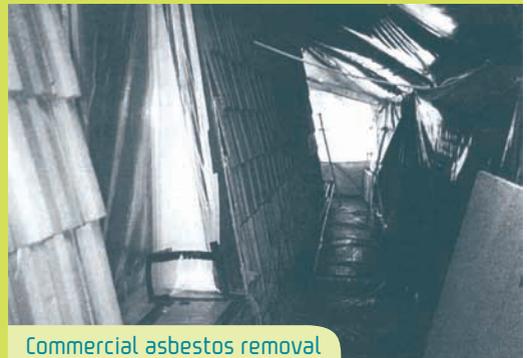
# Removal of other ACM

- Before you begin any work with asbestos, follow the checklist on page 3 for preparing yourself and the surrounding work area.
- Asbestos-backed floor tiles or vinyl sheeting should only be removed 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 as on page 8.

The Ministry of Health strongly recommends that you use MBIE certified contractors to remove ACM, particularly if there is wire, cladding, paint or plastic covering the ACM, 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



Commercial asbestos removal

# How to clean-up and dispose of asbestos waste

After working with asbestos products, clean up the work area thoroughly.

To do this:

- a. Wipe down any exposed surface with a damp cloth to collect dust. These cloths should 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. Put any thick asbestos slurry in a tightly-sealed container and dispose of in the asbestos waste bag.
- d. Dispose of polyethylene covering, tape, etc, in the waste bag.
- e. Remove protective gear carefully and dispose of it in waste bags after work is completed, and the area cleared.
- f. Fasten all waste bags securely with adhesive tape. Ensure that all bags are clearly labelled CONTAINS ASBESTOS WASTE.
- g. Vacuum the area using a vacuum cleaner fitted with a HEPA filter. Dispose of the vacuum cleaner bag in the asbestos waste bag.
- h. Open windows to ventilate the area if indoors.
- i. Turn on electricity.
- j. Shower straight away after working with asbestos and clearing up.
- k. Ensure that all disposal bags are securely fastened. Dispose of asbestos waste bags at an approved landfill. Your local authority can advise on approved sites in your area.
- l. 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 MBIE certified contractors to remove ACM from your home, as they are fully trained and fully equipped to do this work safely.

## Where can I go for more information and help?

You can get further information about asbestos, its identification, its safe handling and removal, protective equipment and disposal procedures from health protection officers at your local public health unit. You can also read the *New Zealand Guidelines for the Management and Removal of Asbestos* available at [www.osh.govt.nz/publications/booklets/asbestos-management-removal/index.asp](http://www.osh.govt.nz/publications/booklets/asbestos-management-removal/index.asp)



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