

ASBESTOS DISPOSAL

Crocidolite (blue asbestos) was used in many fibrous cement products before 1970 and several other types were used until 1986. A large number of products made from asbestos cement can still be found in Australian buildings. These include flat, corrugated or compressed asbestos cement sheeting, asbestos cement pipes such as water, drainage and flue pipes, roofing shingles and guttering. It is important to be aware of the dangers of asbestos, in order to act responsibly and avoid damaging your health.

If you are unsure of the type of asbestos you have, all asbestos cement sheeting must be treated as though containing amosite or crocidolite forms of asbestos as well as chrysotile.

If asbestos cement products are left undisturbed and in good condition, they present no significant health risk; however, safety precautions must be taken when renovating or demolishing a building that contains asbestos cement materials. Prolonged, unprotected exposure to asbestos dust and fibres may result in asbestosis (a form of lung cancer) or related respiratory complications.

WHAT CAN I DO?

Use a licensed asbestos removal contractor to carry out demolition work and to properly remove and dispose of asbestos.

All work procedures involving asbestos cement should be devised to minimise the release of dust and fibres. The safety precautions you should take when working with or removing these products include:

- Prior to the commencement of any work, occupants of all adjoining premises are to be advised so that appropriate measures can be taken to avoid exposure
- Close all windows and doors of houses and similar buildings. In factory-type buildings where there are no ceilings, the area below or adjacent to the work should be roped off or barriers erected
- Wear disposable coveralls and an approved dust respirator (that meets standard Australian requirements for working with asbestos and its safe removal)
- Do not use power tools (other than drills for the removal of the roofing screws)
- Do not water-blast or scrub with a stiff broom. It is illegal to water-blast asbestos-cement products
- Seal asbestos cement sheets with PVA paint or wet with water – seal roof with PVA paint well before removal so workers do not slip on a wet roof
- Wet down material to reduce the release of dust. High water pressure must not be used
- Wet clean gutters and collect the material for proper disposal

- Never cut into a fibro sheet. Always remove the entire sheet and replace with a non-asbestos product
- Do not drop asbestos sheets. Use drop sheets to collect any accidental breakages
- Clean all asbestos cement residues from the roof space, where applicable, and the site, using an approved (that meets standard Australian requirements for working with asbestos and its safe removal) vacuum cleaner or wet methods. Do not use household vacuum cleaners
- Do not reuse asbestos cement products. The use of asbestos is now illegal
- All asbestos waste must be wet removed from the site as soon as possible in covered bins or on a covered truck
- The waste must be disposed of at a Waste Management Centre approved by the NSW Environment Protection Authority
- Coveralls and masks must be placed in a plastic bag for disposal. Overalls should be laundered separate to clothes

All asbestos waste should be kept wet. Make sure all asbestos waste is either wrapped in plastic or put in lined bins or vehicles and covered. Remove all waste from the site in a covered vehicle, as soon as practicable. All waste containing asbestos must be disposed of at a Waste Management Centre approved by the NSW Environment Protection Authority, in an approved manner.

Before starting any work where asbestos may be present contact WorkCover Authority NSW.

MORE INFORMATION

To find out if your fibro contains asbestos, contact an asbestos expert to inspect it. Details of asbestos testing authorities and licensed asbestos removal contractors are available from WorkCover's Assistance Service on 1800 062 103, 131 050.

- Go to www.workcover.nsw.gov.au and click on the OHS tab to find the asbestos and fibro link. This contains safety information, legal obligations and guidelines for removal contractors.
- Go to www.ascc.gov.au and click on the OHS standards and codes of practice and then the Index of National Standards, Codes of Practice and related guidance material, for codes of practice and guidelines on the safe removal of asbestos
- The NSW Environment Protection Authority's Licensing Section (telephone 131 555 or (02) 9325 5686) can provide details of approved waste disposal locations.
- For further information contact your local council's Waste Management or Health and Building staff.