

Asbestos and home renovations



Asbestos Awareness Ambassador, Trevor Gillmeister

Asbestos warning sticker

If your house was built before 1990, place this sticker where a tradesperson or new owner is likely to see it before starting renovation work.



Common locations where asbestos is found



Super Six roof sheeting and guttering



Slotted Hardiflex soffit sheeting



Asbestos guttering



Woven Hardiplank fence



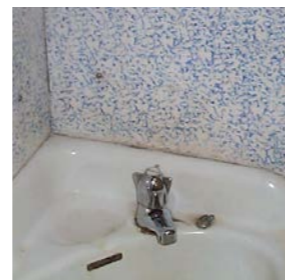
Imitation brick cladding



Internal wall/ceiling sheets



Sheet vinyl floor covering



Tilux splashback

AEU15/5506



Contact us

For more information about asbestos, a list of licensed asbestos removalists or to obtain a copy of *Asbestos—a guide for minor renovation*, contact us:

 qld.gov.au/asbestos

 13 QGOV (13 74 68)

Contact your local council for more information about disposing of asbestos at local waste dumps.

Play it safe with asbestos —
Don't risk exposing yourself or others to airborne asbestos fibres during your renovation.

Does my home contain asbestos?

As a general rule, if your home was built before 1990, it is likely to contain some asbestos materials.

Asbestos was used in more than 3000 products and applications and it is estimated to be in one in three homes across Australia.

Most building materials that contain asbestos in a domestic home are safe if they are in good condition, sealed and left alone.

Asbestos materials can be found on the inside and outside of homes.

Inside, asbestos cement wall sheeting could be painted, wallpapered or tiled. Some sheet vinyl flooring types may have an asbestos backing and there could be products such as Tilux used in the bathroom.

Outside, asbestos materials were often used in various profiles as wall cladding, under eaves or as corrugated Super Six roof sheeting. They were also used to build sheds, fences and garden edging and used in vent pipes and the surrounds of disconnector traps. Some homes will have an asbestos backing board to their electrical switchboard.

Will I do my own renovation or get a licensed professional to help?

If more than 10 m² of non-friable asbestos is to be removed, you must use a licensed asbestos removalist or obtain a certificate yourself from the Department of Health.

If less than 10 m² of non-friable asbestos is to be removed or disturbed, you don't need a licence, but you still need to take precautions to avoid exposure to asbestos fibres.

Non-friable asbestos is solid, rigid and the asbestos fibres are tightly bound to prevent them becoming airborne. Examples of this type of material are commonly known as fibro, asbestos cement or AC sheeting.

Friable asbestos (i.e. asbestos product that is loosely bound together or easily crumbles under hand pressure) can only be removed by a licensed Class A asbestos removalist.

A common location of friable asbestos in a home is in the backing to sheet vinyl floor coverings.

Before starting any renovation work, ask yourself or your tradesperson these questions:

1. Can you avoid disturbing asbestos materials?

If asbestos materials are in good condition, finding an alternative to disturbing them is the best option. If you're not sure whether a building product contains asbestos, assume it does or have it tested at a National Association of Testing Authorities accredited laboratory.

Do not assume a tradesperson will identify something as asbestos containing material and make sure you tell them that you know or suspect the material contains asbestos before engaging them.

2. Who will do your job?

For a job that needs to be done by a licensed asbestos removalist, it's best to get three quotes and consider which one will ensure that the work is managed safely. Check online to see if the removalist is licensed and seek information about previous jobs they have completed.

If the job does not require a licensed asbestos removalist, determine if any asbestos materials will be disturbed (for example, drilling holes into asbestos sheeting), before you engage a tradesperson.

Ensure the tradesperson is licensed with the Queensland Building and Construction Commission and has a registered business name and fixed address. It's important to ask what experience they have handling or disturbing asbestos materials and confirm they will use safe work procedures to ensure asbestos fibres do not become airborne or inhaled.

3. How will asbestos fibres be contained?

Home renovators and tradespeople have a legal responsibility to protect the health of others by not releasing asbestos fibres during their work. They must also ensure that no asbestos dust is left behind after a task is completed.

Before you disturb any building material you must check whether it is likely to contain asbestos (or assume it does). If it does contain asbestos:

- Prevent other people from entering the work area.
- Lay down thick plastic to capture asbestos debris.

- At a minimum, use a P2 respirator, disposable coveralls with a hood and boot covers.
- Use manually operated hand tools or low-speed battery powered tools (below 650 rpm) where possible in conjunction with dust control methods (e.g. wet methods, using pastes, foams, gels and/or tools fitted with local exhaust ventilation dust control hoods). Never use power tools (such as power saws, drills, sanders and angle grinders) or high pressure water blasters on asbestos materials.

- For large inside jobs, clear the room of furniture, take down curtains or blinds and cover the floor (especially carpet) with layers of thick plastic. This will make it easier to clean up and prevent any asbestos fibres settling on them.
- After the job, ensure the work area is clean and free of asbestos waste, dust and debris. Clean up safely to avoid spreading fibres. It's important that you never use your household vacuum cleaner (even if it has a high efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filter) as it will spread fibres further.

Ensure your neighbours know when the work will be done and that the asbestos materials will be handled using safe work procedures.

4. How will you dispose of asbestos waste?

Contact your local council to find out if they accept asbestos waste. There are weight limitations for transporting asbestos and it must be labelled and contained by wrapping it in thick plastic.

An easier alternative is to engage a waste contractor with environmental authority to transport regulated waste.

Remember, if you are removing non-friable asbestos yourself:

1. Are you aware of the risks?
2. Can you avoid asbestos fibres becoming airborne?
3. Can you protect yourself and others?
4. Can you decontaminate the work area after the job is complete?



Asbestos dust control measures