



*Supporting Asbestos Victims*

## ***Asbestos Diseases Foundation of Australia***

### **ASBESTOS...**

### **WHAT HANDYMEN, WOMEN & HOMEOWNERS NEED TO KNOW!!!**

#### **The Importance of Safely Managing Asbestos in and Around the Home**

- 1 in 3 Australian homes contains building materials with asbestos
- The risk to families is when building materials containing asbestos are disturbed or damaged and this can release dangerous dust and fibres that can be inhaled
- People put themselves and their children at risk if they are not aware of the hazards of working with asbestos materials including fibro
- There are legal and safety requirements for the management of asbestos. Follow the regulations. It's not worth the risk.
- The cost of asbestos removal by a licenced professional is comparable in price to most licenced tradesmen including electricians, plumbers and tilers
- The cost of disposal at a lawful landfill site is usually included when using a licenced professional removalist

#### **It is Important Everyone Knows About Asbestos Health Risks and Safety Requirements**

While some people may ensure they follow the regulations and safety requirements to remove small amounts of asbestos themselves, we recommend retaining a licenced asbestos removal professional who is equipped to protect you and your family from the dangers asbestos dust.

- When working in and around the home or renovating, if in doubt, assume you are dealing with asbestos and take every precaution
- The safest way to manage the removal of asbestos is to hire a licenced asbestos removal contractor
- Where asbestos fibres are friable (loose and not bonded into building materials), only licenced friable asbestos removalists are allowed to remove it
- If you do need to work with any material that may contain asbestos, ensure you take all the necessary precautions to protect yourself and minimise the release of dust or small particles from the asbestos materials that may affect others including children

#### **Why Can Asbestos Dust or Fibres be Dangerous to Your Health?**

If you don't observe safety precautions when removing or working with asbestos, you risk exposing yourself and your family to long-term health risks.

- There is no safe level of exposure to asbestos fibres!
- If asbestos is disturbed it can release dangerous fine particles of dust containing asbestos fibres
- Breathing in dust containing asbestos fibres can cause asbestosis, lung cancer and mesothelioma
- Mesothelioma is a cancer which most often occurs in the lining of the lung. There is no cure
- The rates of malignant mesothelioma (an incurable cancer) are expected to rise from 2012 to 2020.
- The risk of contracting asbestos related diseases increases with the number of fibres inhaled and the length of time that you inhaled asbestos fibres (number of years exposed)
- The risk of lung cancer from inhaling asbestos fibres is greatly increased if you smoke

- Symptoms of asbestos dust related diseases do not usually appear until about 20 to 30 years after the first exposure to asbestos
- The average time between exposure and developing mesothelioma is about 45 years

### What NOT to Do With Asbestos in Your Home

- Never use tools on asbestos materials as they will make asbestos fibres airborne including:
  - o Power tools such as electric drills, angle grinders, circular saws and electric sanders
  - o Never use high pressure water blasters or compressed air

### When Is Asbestos in the Home NOT a Significant Health Risk?

- Studies have shown that asbestos products, if in sound condition and left undisturbed, are not a significant health risk
- If the asbestos fibres remain firmly bound in a solid cement sheet or structure, generally you do not need to remove the asbestos
- If your home contains bonded asbestos products that are in good condition, leave them alone but remember to check them occasionally for any signs of wear and tear

### About to Renovate and Not Sure If there is Asbestos in Your Home?

- Asbestos fibres were used widely in building materials before the mid-1980s
- If your house was built or renovated before the mid-1980s, it is likely to contain asbestos cement building materials
- Products made from bonded asbestos cement included fibro sheeting (flat and corrugated), water, drainage and flue pipes, roofing shingles and guttering
- If you are not sure if asbestos is in your home or in need of replacement, you can have your home inspected for unsafe asbestos by a licenced removalist or occupational hygienist

### Has Asbestos Exposure Been Linked to DIY Renovating?

In 2008, a study by Professor Anthony Johnson et al into 'The prevalence of self reported asbestos exposure during home renovation in NSW residents' showed:

- 60.5% of do it yourself (DIY) renovators reported being exposed to asbestos during home renovations
- 53% reported their partner and 40% reported their children were also exposed to asbestos during home DIY home renovations
- Non DIY renovators were less likely to be exposed or have their families exposed
- 58% of DIY renovators cut AC Fibro Sheeting – this was the most common activity resulting in asbestos exposure
- 37% of DIY renovators reported using a power tool to cut asbestos products

The study concluded that asbestos exposure was common during home renovations – particularly in DIY and found a significant number of people were planning further renovations in the next five years.

### Important Asbestos Facts

- Most people can't tell whether building materials contain asbestos just by looking at them
- Unless you take the required safety precautions and follow regulations, Don't cut it! Don't drill it! Don't drop it! Don't sand it! Don't saw it! Don't scrape it! Don't scrub it! Don't dismantle it! Don't tip it! Don't waterblast it! Don't demolish it! And whatever you do... Don't dump it!
- If you do need to work with any material that may contain asbestos, always work so there is minimal dust or small particles released from the asbestos materials
- Only scientific testing of a sample of material by an accredited National Association of Testing Authorities (NATA) asbestos testing laboratory can confirm the presence of asbestos. For information on testing and accredited laboratories in your area, visit [www.nata.asn.au](http://www.nata.asn.au) or call (03) 9329 1633
- Asbestos materials that are in good condition are unlikely to release asbestos fibres if left undisturbed
- If asbestos materials are in good condition, paint them and leave them alone
- The use of asbestos in products has been banned since 2003

## Understanding Asbestos

- Asbestos building materials is described as either "bonded" or "friable".
- Friable asbestos is any material containing asbestos and is in the form of a powder or can be crumbled, pulverised or reduced to powder by hand pressure when dry.

Friable asbestos was not commonly used in the home; it was mainly used in industrial applications.

- Bonded asbestos is any material (other than friable asbestos) that contains asbestos. Bonded asbestos cannot be crumbled, pulverised or reduced to a powder by hand pressure when dry.

Common uses for bonded asbestos in buildings include: flat (fibro), corrugated or compressed asbestos cement sheets; water, drainage and flue pipes; and floor tiles.

WorkCover NSW has produced a fact sheet about Bonded Asbestos

## Where Might Asbestos Be Found in Your Home?

Products made from bonded asbestos cement that may have been used in your home include:

- Fibro sheeting (flat and corrugated) which may have been used in internal walls and ceilings, external walls and cladding, infill panels in windows and doors, eaves, fencing, carports, backyard sheds and dog kennels, electrical switchboards, sheeting under floor tiles, bathroom walls, backing to floor tiles and sheet vinyl, carpet underlay, and the backing behind the ceramic wall tiles and textile seals to the oven
- Water drainage and flue pipes
- Roofing shingles and guttering

**IMPORTANT: If fire, hail, or water blasting damages bonded asbestos, it may become friable asbestos material and must be managed and removed by a licenced Friable Asbestos Removalist.**

## What Are the Legal Requirements When Working with Asbestos?

The NSW Government has regulations in force to protect you, your family, the environment and the community when you are working with asbestos. Legal requirements relating to asbestos include:

- It is illegal to dispose of asbestos waste in domestic garbage bins
- It is illegal to re-use or recycle asbestos products
- It is illegal to dump asbestos products
- It is illegal to use power tools that make asbestos fibres airborne
- It is illegal to water blast asbestos cement sheets (fibro)
- Only licenced asbestos removalists can remove asbestos of 10 square metres or more
- Only licenced Friable Asbestos Removalists are able to handle or remove any amount of friable asbestos
- Licensed removal work has to be notified to WorkCover 7 days prior to removal
- A worksite permit must be issued to remove friable asbestos
- All licenced contractors have to be able to give you a copy of their licence, you should ask to see their licence when hiring an asbestos removalist to ensure they have a current licence
- 10 square metres is equivalent to the size of a typical bedroom wall in an average home or about the size of a small bathroom or an outside toilet or shed
- All licenced contractors must be able to give you a copy of their current licence - ask to see their licence when hiring an asbestos removalist
- All asbestos removal is to be in accordance with the Code of Practice for the Safe Removal of Asbestos NOHSC [2002(2005)]
- It is illegal to bury asbestos on your own property
- All asbestos must be legally disposed of at a lawful landfill site. Not every landfill site in NSW is authorised to accept asbestos. To find a site near you visit: [www.environment.nsw.gov.au](http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au)
- Your council may also have policies regarding the removal of asbestos so visit your council's website to find out what's required

## Removal of Asbestos by Licenced Removalists

To ensure protection of you and your family we recommend using a licenced professional to remove asbestos from your home. To carry out this type of work in New South Wales contractors must:

- Be licenced from WorkCover NSW to remove any amount of friable asbestos
- Have a licence from WorkCover NSW to remove 10 square metres or more of bonded asbestos
- Obtain a site-specific permit from WorkCover NSW for removal of friable asbestos and notify for bonded asbestos

**IMPORTANT: Be sure to confirm the contractor has the appropriate class of licence for the asbestos removal job and ask for a copy of their licence prior to engaging them. For more information, contact:**

- WorkCover NSW on 13 10 50 or,
- The Asbestos and Demolition Unit Information line on (02) 8260 5885

When the licenced removalist has disposed of the asbestos, ask the company to provide you with copies of disposal receipts and retain them for your records

## Is it Safe to Remove Asbestos Yourself?

If you must remove it yourself, you **MUST** take precautions! Removing asbestos can be a dangerous and complicated process. We recommend using licenced professional removalists who will also dispose of it in accordance with NSW Government regulations.

However, if you are thinking about removing even a small amount of asbestos yourself, at the very minimum you should meticulously follow ALL of the in order to protect your health and the health of those around you including children.

The important point is this: if you need to work with materials that may contain asbestos, you must work so there is a minimal release of fibres, dust or small particles from the asbestos materials.

It is recommended that if you are considering removing or working with asbestos yourself, you undertake a training course to ensure you have the training to do it safely. Courses are available at: TAFE NSW, Housing Industry Association (HIA), Local Government Training Institute, Comet Training, Masters Builders Association (MBA) and Asbestos Removal Contractors Association NSW (ARCA).

**IMPORTANT: If the asbestos is in powder form or can be crumbled, pulverised or reduced to powder by hand pressure when dry, it must be removed by an asbestos removal contractor with a friable asbestos licence.**

## Disposing of Asbestos

- Asbestos waste can only be disposed of at specific landfills located in various regions of in NSW
- To arrange to dispose of asbestos, you must first contact your local council to locate your nearest licenced waste landfill site
- Ensure asbestos waste has been wetted, wrapped in 200um thick plastic, and sealed with tape before it is transported to a landfill site that may lawfully receive the waste
- It must be clearly labelled as "asbestos waste"
- It must be transported in a covered, leak-proof vehicle
- It is wise to keep copies of receipts from landfills where asbestos was taken as councils or the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) may require you to produce these receipts as proof of proper disposal