
Queensland flood, storm and natural disaster recovery

Asbestos – cleaning and/or removing asbestos containing materials

This information is for home owners, businesses and volunteers who are involved with the clean up and recovery of buildings damaged by the recent floods, storms and other natural disasters.

Where are asbestos materials found?

- Buildings built before 1990 may contain asbestos materials. Removal of 10m² or more of asbestos materials must be done by a licensed asbestos removalist. You can download a poster [Where to look for asbestos](#), which shows the potential location of asbestos materials in a house, from www.worksafe.qld.gov.au.
- General household debris, such as kitchen bench tops, chests, wardrobes, shelves and cabinets, are unlikely to contain asbestos and can be disposed of without any concern with general rubbish.

Things to avoid

- Avoid removing asbestos materials unless absolutely necessary. Only remove asbestos materials that are already broken and dislodged.
- Avoid breaking asbestos materials.
- Asbestos roofs must **NOT** be cleaned using high pressure water cleaners or water blasters. More information is available from the Workplace Health and Safety Queensland website on [Cleaning asbestos cement roofs](#).
- Avoid walking on corrugated asbestos roofs as they may collapse from the weight.
- Avoid using high pressure water to clean the surface of any asbestos materials. Be aware that:
 - care must be exercised when cleaning the surface of asbestos materials so as to avoid damage and the release of asbestos fibres
 - other surfaces containing asbestos materials such as walls should be cleaned using water hoses or by hand
 - regularly check the surface of the material you are cleaning to ensure it is not being damaged.
- Do not use power tools or any abrasive materials (e.g. sanders) on asbestos materials.
- Do not put asbestos waste into bins or with items for kerbside collection.

In all situations

- Turn off all electricity to your work area before starting work where water may contact electrical installations.
- Make sure asbestos materials are kept damp at all times when working with them. You can use a garden hose, watering can, trigger-spray bottle or similar. No high pressure cleaners.

When cleaning asbestos materials

- Asbestos materials can be cleaned with soapy water and a cloth or sponge or light scrubbing (e.g. soft brush or broom) or with a garden hose.
- Regularly check the surface of the material you are cleaning to make sure it is not being damaged. If damage is occurring, clean more gently.

When picking up pieces of asbestos material

- If not already wet, wet the pieces with water.
- Pick up the pieces and place them into a thick plastic bag and place this bag into another bag (double bagging). Seal the bag opening with tape or a knot.
- Label the outer bag “Caution – Asbestos”.
- Contact your local council to find out how you can dispose of the waste safely.

When planning to remove less than 10m² of asbestos materials

- Download a copy of [Asbestos: a home renovator’s and tradesperson’s guide for minor work in domestic premises](#) from www.worksafe.qld.gov.au. This document provides clear information on the equipment you need, how to prepare your work area, removing the asbestos materials and cleaning up.

When planning to remove 10m² or more of asbestos materials

- You must either obtain an asbestos removal licence or engage a licensed asbestos contractor.
- Details on how to get a licence and of licensed contractors may be obtained by contacting Workplace Health and Safety Queensland on 1300 369 915.

Contact us

For residents and homeowners concerned about asbestos related health issues, contact Queensland Health on 13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84) or visit www.health.qld.gov.au.

Contact your local council regarding the disposal of asbestos materials.

For employers and workers needing advice on making your workplace safe and healthy after the floods, visit the Workplace Health and Safety Queensland website at www.worksafe.qld.gov.au or call 1800 177 717. This is a temporary dedicated number for businesses affected by flooding and will operate from 7am-7pm, 7 days a week.