

Asbestos removal

Asbestos was extensively used in building materials across Australia from the 1940s until it was banned in the 1980s.

Asbestos becomes a health hazard when fibres of a breathable size become airborne and are then inhaled.

Harmful impacts on health include lung cancer, lung scarring that impairs breathing, lung cancer, and diseases that affect the lung linings.

Building with asbestos was banned in the 1980s, but some materials may have been used in later construction.

This fact sheet contains basic information only. Before working with asbestos, contact Fair and Safe Work Queensland (see contact details on the next page).

Types of asbestos

There are two main types of materials containing asbestos that are used in building: friable (loose) asbestos; and bonded (non-friable) asbestos.

Friable (loose) asbestos

Friable asbestos is any asbestos-containing material that, when dry, can be easily crumbled by hand.

Common examples of friable asbestos are acoustic ceilings and tiles, many types of plasters, wallboard, sprayed asbestos insulation, and pipe and boiler insulation.

Sweeping, dusting or using a household vacuum will make these fibres airborne.

This type of asbestos can only be removed by a person holding an 'A Class' licence (see below).

Bonded (non-friable) asbestos

Bonded asbestos contains a binder or hardening agent such as cement, asphalt or vinyl and is difficult to damage by hand.

Common examples of bonded asbestos are asphalt roofing shingles, vinyl asbestos floor tiles, asbestos-cement sheets (fibro), and electrical switchboards.

Licences required to remove asbestos

Removing asbestos is licensed by Fair and Safe Work Queensland. A person removing more than 10m² of asbestos must have an 'A Class' or 'B Class' licence:

- 'A' Class Licence – is required to remove **loose** (friable) asbestos; holders do not require a 'B' class licence.
- 'B' Class Licence – is required to remove 10m² or more of **bonded** asbestos.
- Removing less than 10m² does not require a licence, but safety precautions are essential.

Environmental tips

Play it safe with asbestos, for everyone's sake:

- Don't store or reuse any asbestos materials you have removed.
- Don't dispose of asbestos waste in a domestic rubbish bin or skip or council waste collections.
- Don't dump asbestos waste in the environment. Fines apply.

Useful contacts

- Queensland Building and Construction Commission (QBCC)
Ph: 139 333
Web: www.qbcc.qld.gov.au
- Fair and Safe Work Queensland
Ph: 1300 369 915
Web: www.deir.qld.gov.au/workplace
- Asbestos Industry Association
Ph: 07 3870 5561
Web: www.asbestosindustry.asn.au
- National Association of Testing Authorities (NATA)
Ph: 1800 621 666
Web: www.nata.com.au/nata/contact-nata/contact-us
- Asbestos & You
Web: www.asbestosandyou.com.au

Need more information?

Contact Fair and Safe Work Queensland for more information on working with asbestos.

If you need information about licensing for associated building work, call QBCC on 139 333 or visit www.qbcc.qld.gov.au.