

# Protect yourself from asbestos when renovating

In most circumstances the law requires that you use a licensed asbestos removalist to deal with any asbestos in your home. We strongly recommend that you do this in all cases to protect you and your family.

If you are legally able to remove the asbestos yourself and choose to do so, follow the recommendations in this fact sheet. If in doubt, contact your local council for advice or seek professional advice.

## What is personal protective equipment and why should I use it?

Personal protective equipment (PPE) is any specially-designed clothing or equipment that protects the wearer from a potential risk or hazard. In the case of asbestos, PPE is used to prevent the inhalation of asbestos fibres and to prevent contamination of clothing. Wearing PPE creates a barrier between you and the asbestos, protecting you from fibres that become airborne.

## Where can I get PPE?

PPE is commercially available at construction suppliers, safety equipment retailers and some hardware chains.



Wear protective clothing when renovating.



## What type of PPE do I use for asbestos removal?

PPE varies according to the job you are doing. For asbestos work it usually comprises (but is not limited to) the following items:

- disposable coveralls
- shoe covers
- gloves
- respirator (special mask)
- protective eyewear.

## How do I use PPE?

You need to wear all PPE items whenever you're working with asbestos.

Wear the PPE in the following order.



### 1. Disposable coveralls

- Type 5, category 3 (prEN ISO 13982-1) to protect against penetration of asbestos fibres. Rating information is provided on the packet.
- Should be one size too big to prevent breaking or tearing.
- Should include a hood and elasticised arm and leg cuffs.



### 2. Shoe covers

- Are worn over footwear, completely covering them and securing them above the ankle. The coverall leg cuffs are then pulled down over the top of the shoe covers.
- If shoe covers are not available, don't wear shoes with laces as these can't easily be decontaminated. Gumboots are recommended as they are easily wiped clean and can be used afterwards for non-asbestos work.



### 3. Gloves

- Tuck these under the coverall arm cuffs. If loose, secure with tape.



### 4. Breathing protection

- **A suitable respirator must be worn at all times when working with asbestos.**
- A P2 protection rating, half face disposable particulate respirator is recommended. **A simple dust mask is not suitable.**
- For effective facial seal wearer must be clean-shaven and never place respirator over hat or beanie.



### 5. Protective eyewear

- Wear protective eyewear whenever working in dusty conditions.
- Place the coverall hood over the eyewear arms and respirator straps.

## Doing the job...

You need to get everything ready before you start the job, because once you are contaminated you need to be able to step straight into the decontamination area. Even if you don't appear dirty after working with asbestos, you still need to decontaminate.

You also need to prevent the rest of your home from becoming contaminated while you are doing the work. You should do this by sealing off the work area as well as possible from other spaces using plastic sheeting, and removing anything that could become contaminated with asbestos fibres. This includes floor coverings (e.g. rugs), pet bowls, kitchen and bathroom items, soft furnishings, potted plants and washing on clotheslines.

Send the kids, pets and other household members out for the day while you are working, and don't work on a particularly windy day.

Do not do anything to the asbestos that will create dust. This means you should not break asbestos sheeting, and definitely don't use power tools, saws, sanders, drills, brooms or brushes.

## How do I decontaminate myself and the work area?

All asbestos-containing materials must be placed in labelled asbestos waste bags or wrapped with 200um polythene/plastic sheet, which can be purchased at the same place as the PPE.

Place a plastic drop sheet below the asbestos removal work area to capture the asbestos-containing materials and any dust. Once you are confident all dust and debris have been removed from the work area, and the asbestos is removed and safely wrapped and ready for disposal, it's time to decontaminate.

**Please note: Never use a domestic vacuum cleaner to remove dust from an asbestos removal work area, even if it has a HEPA filter.**

To decontaminate:

- Use a wet wipe or wet rag to clean any dust and debris on the drop sheet.
- Use a new wet wipe or wet rag to remove dust from your disposable coveralls and any tools used during the removal works.
- Wrap plastic drop sheets by gently folding each sheet in on itself, ensuring the wet wipes/rags used for the initial decontamination are wrapped within the sheet as they are asbestos waste. Seal the wrapped plastic sheets or place into a labelled asbestos waste bag and seal with duct tape.
- Now you can remove your PPE. **Your respirator must remain on while you remove the rest of your PPE.** Remove the coveralls by rolling inside out from the top down. Place them in a labelled asbestos waste bag or have a clean smaller plastic drop sheet laid out to wrap your PPE in. Remove your shoe covers, clean your gumboots with wet wipes and place the wet wipes in with your coveralls. If you used a plastic drop sheet, wrap it as above but don't seal it yet.
- Once your PPE is in a labelled bag or plastic drop sheet, you can remove your respirator and place it with the other waste. Use a wet wipe or wet rag to wipe the outside of bags or plastic drop sheets before removing them from the work area. Seal the wrapped plastic sheet/labelled bag with duct tape.
- Clearly label any plastic sheets with 'DANGER: ASBESTOS WASTE'.
- Wash hands, nails and face thoroughly with soapy water.

## How do I dispose of PPE?

Not all waste centres and landfills accept asbestos waste. Visit the NSW Environment Protection Authority website [www.epa.nsw.gov.au](http://www.epa.nsw.gov.au) for a list of facilities that accept household asbestos. Ensure all asbestos waste is double wrapped and sealed to prevent tearing. DO NOT place the asbestos waste in any of your domestic bins.

## Remember...

- Make sure no-one enters the asbestos work area unless they're wearing PPE.
- Turn off all heating, air conditioning systems and fans and close all doors and windows to prevent draughts.
- Cover or remove anything that could become contaminated with asbestos fibres (including floors and other surfaces, pets discussed earlier, pet bowls, kitchen items, soft furnishings and potted plants) and remove washing from clotheslines.

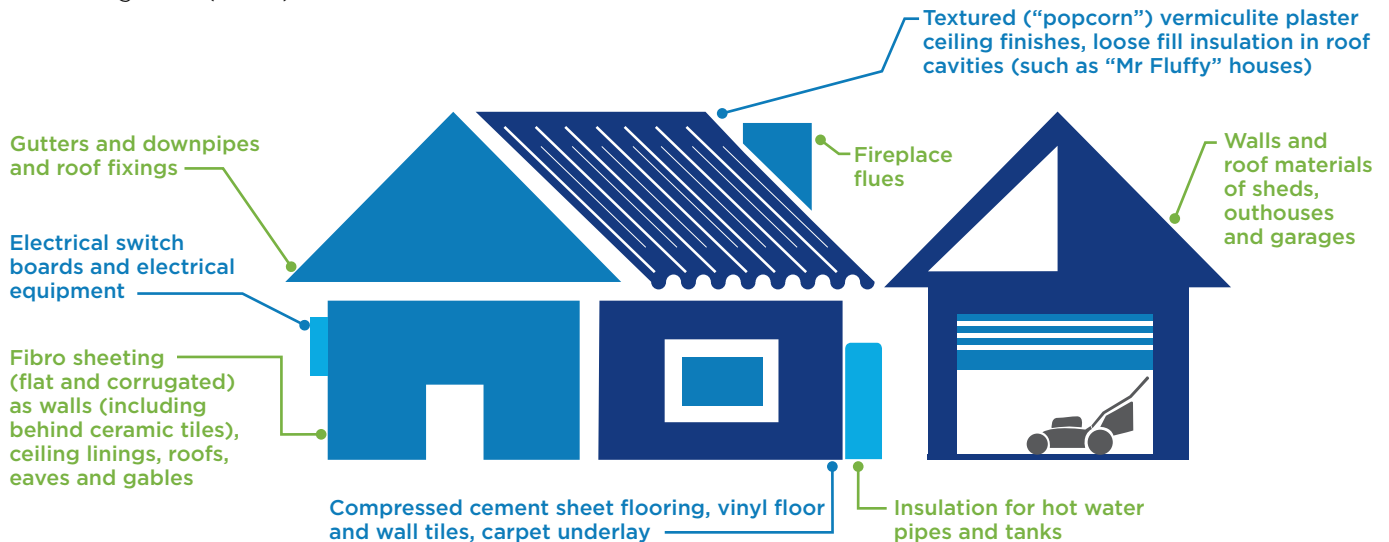


## Where am I likely to find asbestos?

Because of its popularity as a building material, many buildings built before the late 1980s are likely to contain asbestos in some form. The graphic below shows some of the common places it can be found.

Other materials that may contain asbestos include:

- fireproofing materials – structural steel
- thermal insulation – pipe lagging and boiler insulation.
- acoustic insulation – plant rooms and air handling units (AHUs)
- woven materials – window rope, seal and gaskets
- binders/fillers/extenders in products – mastics, expansion joints, window putty and industrial paints
- friction materials – brake pads.



Remnants of asbestos can also be found in soils where old sheds or houses have been demolished in the past.

### ALWAYS...

- ✓ **Pre-plan** your job.
- ✓ **Cover** the work area in plastic drop sheets with a thickness of 200um.
- ✓ **Wear** PPE that is rated for asbestos removal.
- ✓ **Ensure** no electrical products or exposed wiring are in the work area.
- ✓ **Wet** the asbestos material using a gentle spray of water.
- ✓ **Minimise** the number of people in the work area.
- ✓ **Decontaminate** yourself, the work area and equipment when the work is completed.

### NEVER...

- ✗ **Create** dust.
- ✗ **Break** asbestos material.
- ✗ **Work** in draughty or windy conditions.
- ✗ **Use** brooms, brushes or high-pressure water.
- ✗ **Use** household vacuum cleaners.
- ✗ **Remove** your respirator while still working with asbestos.
- ✗ **Leave** the asbestos work area without decontaminating first.



Visit [asbestos.nsw.gov.au](http://asbestos.nsw.gov.au) to find out more.

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