

Asbestos Removal: A Complete Guide

Asbestos was once widely used in building materials for its fire resistance, strength, and insulation properties. Today, it's recognised as a serious health hazard. Inhaling asbestos fibres can cause life-threatening diseases such as mesothelioma, lung cancer, and asbestosis. Because of these risks, [asbestos removal](#) is tightly regulated in Australia and many other countries.

What Is Asbestos?

Asbestos is a group of naturally occurring minerals made up of fine, durable fibres. It was commonly used in:

- Roofing and wall sheeting
- Insulation
- Flooring and ceiling tiles
- Pipe lagging and cement products

Buildings constructed before the late 1980s are most likely to contain asbestos.

Why Is Asbestos Dangerous?

When asbestos materials are disturbed, tiny fibres are released into the air. These fibres can remain airborne for hours and, once inhaled, lodge deep in the lungs. Health risks often appear decades after exposure, making prevention and safe removal essential.

When Do You Need Asbestos Removal?

- **Renovations or Demolitions:** If you're planning work on an older home or commercial property.
- **Damaged Materials:** Crumbling, cracked, or broken asbestos products pose a higher risk.
- **Occupational Safety:** Workplaces must comply with strict health and safety laws regarding asbestos exposure.

Professional Asbestos Removal vs DIY

- **DIY Removal:** In most regions, DIY asbestos removal is either illegal or strictly limited to very small amounts. Even then, it requires protective clothing, masks, and proper

disposal procedures.

- **Professional Removal:** Licensed asbestos removalists have the training, equipment, and permits to safely handle and dispose of asbestos. This is the safest and most compliant option.

The Asbestos Removal Process

1. **Inspection & Testing** – A licensed assessor inspects and confirms asbestos presence.
2. **Risk Assessment** – Planning how to remove or encapsulate materials safely.
3. **Containment** – Sealing off the work area to prevent fibre spread.
4. **Removal** – Carefully dismantling asbestos-containing materials.
5. **Disposal** – Transporting waste to approved asbestos disposal sites.
6. **Clearance Certificate** – An independent assessor ensures the area is safe for re-entry.

Legal Requirements

Each state and territory in Australia has specific laws under the Work Health and Safety (WHS) Regulations governing asbestos management and removal. Fines for improper handling can be significant, and non-compliance risks serious health consequences.

Key Takeaways

- Asbestos removal should always be handled by licensed professionals.
- Safe removal protects not only you and your family but also neighbours and future occupants.
- If you suspect asbestos in your property, stop work immediately and seek professional testing and advice.