

ASBESTOS



Asbestos is a group of naturally occurring minerals made up of microscopic fibres. It was used in the manufacture of more than 3000 types of building and decorator products.

Thousands of various types of Asbestos Containing materials (ACMs) remain hidden in properties constructed before 2004.

If ACMs are damaged or disturbed during work or demolition, asbestos fibres can be released into the air and be inhaled. If fibres are inhaled, this could lead to asbestos-related diseases.

There are two common types of ACM.

- **NON-FRIABLE ASBESTOS** (also known as 'bonded' ACMs) is material containing asbestos that is not friable asbestos including material containing asbestos fibres reinforced with a bonding compound.
- **FRIABLE ASBESTOS** is any material containing asbestos in the form of a powder or can be crumbled, pulverised or reduced to powder by hand pressure when dry. FRIABLE ASBESTOS IS EXTREMELY HAZARDOUS because the fibres are uncontained and can easily become airborne! Some examples of friable asbestos include; fire retardants - sprayed coatings on walls and beams including steel, Insulation - sprayed in building cavities, loose asbestos in ceilings or floors and riser cavities and roof spaces and textured coatings sprayed onto ceilings.

Always check the site register before starting work to see if there is any asbestos present in the area/s you will be working.

What steps must you take if you come across materials you suspect are asbestos?

Treat every suspected ACM as if it is asbestos and take all the required precautions including:

- Stop work immediately!
- DO NOT DISTURB or handle it.
- Do not put yourself or others at risk of possible exposure by rushing into the affected area.
- Calmly and carefully remove all persons from the immediate vicinity and establish an exclusion zone to prevent unauthorised access.
- LEAVE IT where you find it.
- REPORT IT IMMEDIATELY to the Site Manager / Supervisor or the Person With Management or Control of a Workplace.
- IF YOU FIND DUMPED ASBESTOS, report it immediately to your council and/or your local EPA.

What must workers NEVER do with asbestos?

Don't cut it! Don't drill 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! And whatever you do, don't dump it!"

Most asbestos incidents happen when somebody disturbs asbestos because it hasn't been identified or suspected. A licensed asbestos assessor or removalist, or an occupational hygienist can assess if a material has potential to contain asbestos which can be confirmed through testing by an accredited laboratory. Health monitoring must be conducted if workers are carrying out any asbestos-related work or if they are or have been at risk of exposure to asbestos fibres.

When it comes to asbestos, the rule is; If you think a material may contain asbestos, assume it is asbestos and take appropriate precautions!