

# Asbestos

The recent weather events causing flooding and high winds may have caused damage to asbestos containing materials present in internal and external building structures. It is important to be aware of some common asbestos hazards and how to safely manage them. Where concerned, seek advice from an asbestos professional.

## Identification of Asbestos

Any structure built before 1 January 2000 is considered to have asbestos containing materials unless an asbestos survey has been completed by a competent asbestos surveyor proving otherwise.

Worksafe has more information on products and materials that may contain asbestos:

<https://www.worksafe.govt.nz/topic-and-industry/asbestos/working-with-asbestos/where-asbestos-can-be-found/>

Additionally, in an extreme weather event, properties may become newly contaminated with asbestos from other sites.

## Cyclone and Flooding Asbestos Risks

Asbestos containing materials which are broken or damaged are more likely to produce hazardous dust and debris which are more likely to release asbestos fibres.

If a building in which asbestos containing materials are present is damaged it will require a competent asbestos professional. An asbestos consultant, a licensed asbestos assessor and a licensed asbestos removalist can be part of the recovery team.

### It is important to not:

- walk on asbestos roofs
- dispose of asbestos materials with general waste or dump them illegally
- use power tools, water blasters, high pressure water, or compressed air tools on asbestos materials
- bury asbestos materials without proper resource consents and oversight

## Protecting people

Inform all people entering a site if asbestos containing materials are present, particularly where asbestos containing materials are damaged. Cordon off unsafe areas to prevent entry where required and use clear asbestos warning signage. For large or complex asbestos work you should contact a licensed asbestos removalist and a licensed asbestos assessor.

To assess an area contaminated with asbestos the following PPE should be worn

- Disposable coveralls – type 5/6
- Single use gloves
- Easy to clean footwear such as rubber gumboots
- Respirator with P2 particulate filters – preferably a minimum of a half face respirator for minor work

Workers must be trained in how to use the PPE correctly and must be medically fit to wear asbestos respiratory protections and PPE. Respiratory protection must be face-fit tested to ensure it is protecting the wearer adequately.

## Decontamination procedures

Decontamination procedures and the safe removal of asbestos respiratory protection and PPE is a critical requirement following access into asbestos contaminated areas. Minimal contamination procedures include the use of a marked area with a 200 micron polythene drop sheet with wet wipes, water sprayer, foot bath, and a 200 micron asbestos waste bag, and follow the process:

- Spray all over the coveralls with water
- Wipe outside of asbestos respirator with wet wipes
- Wash boots in foot bath and remove them
- Remove disposable coveralls and gloves by rolling them off and inside out and place into the asbestos waste bag
- Double bag the asbestos waste in another 200 micron asbestos waste bag
- Remove the asbestos respirator last, clean it, and place in its storage container
- Asbestos waste bags must be disposed of through a licensed asbestos removalist or at an appropriate asbestos waste facility

## MORE INFORMATION

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For more information on respiratory protection head to the Worksafe website

<https://www.worksafe.govt.nz/topic-and-industry/personal-protective-equipment-ppe/respiratory-protective-equipment/advice-for-businesses/>

More information on asbestos decontamination procedures can be found here

<https://www.worksafe.govt.nz/topic-and-industry/asbestos/ppe-when-working-with-asbestos/>

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