

Asbestos Alert

ASBESTOS? Don't Risk It!

Newcastle City Council recommends you:

- treat all fibro sheets as if they contain asbestos unless tested.
- use a **licensed asbestos removal contractor** to remove all materials containing asbestos.

These recommendations are enforced on all development approvals issued by Newcastle City Council.

What is Asbestos?

Asbestos is the generic term given for a mineral fibre occurring in a fibrous form from certain types of asbestos rock. There are two major groups of asbestos:

1. the serpentine group, which contains chrysotile (white asbestos) which is the most abundant kind of asbestos; and
2. the amphibole group, which contains amosite (brown or grey asbestos), crocidolite (blue asbestos), tremolite, actinolite and anthophyllite.

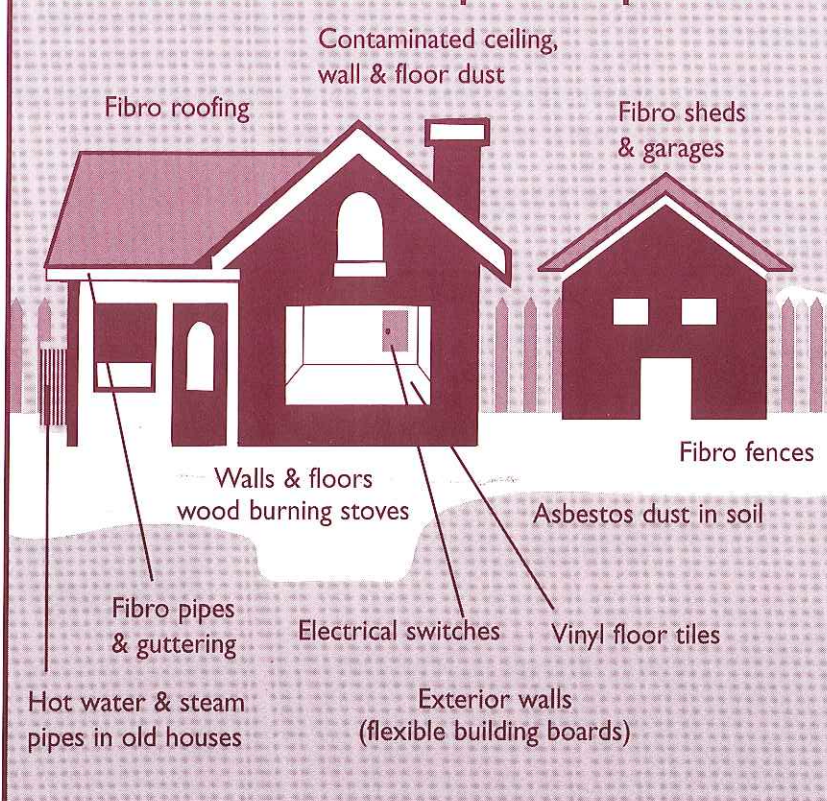
Airborne asbestos fibres are small, odourless and tasteless. They range in size from 0.1 to 10 microns in length (a human hair is about 50 microns in diameter).

Asbestos fibres have a very high tensile strength (capable of resisting ruptures due to extension) and are known for their resistance to heat and fire. Asbestos materials are also resistant to acids, alkalis and corrosion and are commonly used in chemical works.

Where is Asbestos commonly found?

- electrical switches;
- asbestos cement products (flat, compressed or corrugated), fibro pipes (water, drainage and flue), roofing shingles and guttering, flexible building boards (villaboard, hardiflex, wonderboard, flexiboard);
- older products such as stove top pads may have some asbestos compounds;
- walls and floors around wood burning stoves may be protected with asbestos paper, millboard or cement sheets;
- asbestos may be found in some vinyl floor tiles and the backing on vinyl sheet flooring and adhesives;
- hot water and steam pipes in older houses may be coated with an asbestos material or covered with an asbestos blanket or tape;

Sources of Asbestos in products pre 1987



• Chrysotile, or white asbestos has also been used within products such as rubber, plastic, thermosetting resins, adhesives and cements, paints, coatings, caulking compounds and sealants, as a filter in gas cylinders and in filter papers and gasket materials.

As a rule of thumb, fibro products made before 1987 almost certainly contain asbestos. In NSW, the use of asbestos was discontinued in fibro sheets by 1984 and in all other products by 1986. Fibrous cement products no longer contain asbestos either.

When is Asbestos a Problem?

- when damaged;
- when weathered;
- when we disturb it/replace it.

Assessing Your Home For Asbestos Presence

As you cannot tell whether a material contains asbestos by simply looking at it, you should treat possible asbestos materials as if they contain asbestos or have them sampled and analysed by a qualified professional to determine if asbestos is present.

Anyone sampling materials for the presence of asbestos should observe the following safe handling procedures:

- make sure no one else is in the room when sampling is being carried out;
- wear disposable gloves or wash hands after sampling;
- wear an appropriate respirator;
- shut down heating or cooling systems to minimise the spread of any released fibres;
- place a plastic sheet on the floor below the area to be sampled;
- wet the material using a fine mist of water containing a few drops of detergent before taking the sample. The water and detergent mist will reduce the release of asbestos fibres;
- carefully cut a piece of material from the entire depth of the material with a corer, small knife or other sharp object. Place the small piece into a clean container. Tightly seal the container after the sample is in it;
- you should also ensure you label the container with an identification number and clearly state when and where the sample was taken;
- use damp paper towels to clean up any material on the outside of the container or around the sample area;
- patch the sample area to prevent fibre release.

National Association of Testing Authorities (NATA) Registered Laboratories Available for the Identification of Asbestos

AS AT JUNE, 2003

Laboratory	Address	Telephone
HLA - Enviro Services Pty Ltd	18 Warabrook Boulevard, WARABROOK NSW 2304	(02) 49680044
Connell Wagner PPI - Technical Services Branch	Advanced Technology Centre, UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE	(02) 49415415
Australian Safer Environment & Technology Pty Ltd	5/14 - 18 Water Street, HORNSBY NSW 2077	(02) 99872183
Workcover Authority of NSW Laboratory Services Unit	5A Pioneer Avenue, THORNLEIGH NSW 2120	(02) 94734000

For a comprehensive list of NATA registered laboratories who provide an asbestos testing service, please visit their website at www.nata.asn.au.

Please Note: The Hunter Region Health Education Committee is aware that the above laboratories are available to the public for the testing of asbestos fibres, however the Committee has no knowledge of the standard of work and takes no responsibility for any damage or loss whatsoever incurred as a result of any work undertaken by an individual laboratory.

How to get Advice

For further information on asbestos and the environment call the NSW EPA Pollution line on 131555 or your local Council.

Information Correct at June 2003

