

Practice Note # 06



This document is intended to provide guidance to homeowners, workers and the self-employed and is meant to supplement or support the PCBU's own policies.

REMEMBER:

- **Asbestos fibre exposure can cause fatal cancers and diseases**
- **You must also be trained to work safely with asbestos**

Essential Information:
Also refer to the following NZDAA guidance sheets:

- **#1 Personal protective equipment (including RPE)**
- **#2 Selection of Personal Decontamination**
- **#3 What to do if you accidentally discover or disturb asbestos during your work**
- **#4 Disposal of Asbestos Waste**
- **#5 Removing Asbestos Cement (AC) sheets,**

Asbestos and Floods

What this sheet covers

Any structure that was built before 1st January 2000 is considered to contain asbestos building products, unless proven by assessment a suitably qualified and experienced [asbestos surveyor](#).

Storms, floods and heavy winds can cause serious damage to properties including homes, commercial and non-residential properties and farm structures.

Whole buildings and even stockpiled asbestos-containing materials (particularly flat or corrugated sheeting) can be picked up by floodwaters and moved from one location to another. So, even if your home was built after 2000, it is likely that miscellaneous debris and rubbish including asbestos-containing materials from elsewhere can end up on your property.

Should you find displaced structures and debris containing asbestos on your property, it's vital that these materials are managed safely and in line with regulations.

If you live in a flood-affected community you need to know the potential hazards to avoid including asbestos and know what to do to manage asbestos safely.

Why can asbestos-containing materials be dangerous following floods and storms?

When homes and other buildings containing asbestos are damaged during floods, wind and storms (including hail storms), the materials can become eroded, disturbed, broken or friable causing a health risk to homeowners, property owners, property managers and the community.

What you need to know to manage property health and safety risks on your property

If your property has been damaged by storms, floods or heavy winds, you must take a number of safety precautions to protect yourself, your family and the community including being aware that asbestos could be present and what you need to do to manage asbestos and other risks safely.

1. **Contact WorkSafe New Zealand on (0800) 030 040 or the NZDAA on (0800) 469 322** if you are unsure of asbestos health and safety procedures.
2. **DO NOT ENTER A PROPERTY OR STRUCTURE** if there appears to be structural damage. Seek advice from suitably qualified person(s) which may include (but not limited to) structural engineers, utility companies, emergency services and the like. If the damaged structure is presumed to be asbestos-containing, a [licenced asbestos assessor](#) and/or [licenced asbestos removalist](#) should also be contacted prior to reoccupation.
3. **ASBESTOS** must be managed and disposed of safely in accordance with regulations.
4. **Not just asbestos clad buildings contain asbestos** – There are hundreds of different types of asbestos-containing products and it is estimated that within New Zealand there are hundreds of thousands of homes and commercial properties that have asbestos containing material in them .
5. **Know what materials to look for** – Identify asbestos-containing materials by visiting the Australian Asbestos Awareness website's extensive [Asbestos Products Database](#).
6. **If asbestos is present on your property, we recommend only using licenced asbestos removalists** – While it may be legal for homeowners to remove small amounts of asbestos themselves, (e.g. up to 10m²), we recommend you avoid the risk and leave asbestos work to the experts by only using [licenced asbestos removalists](#).

For further information or to report inconsistencies or inaccuracies in this guidance, please visit www.nzdaa.com. This guidance is issued by the New Zealand Demolition and Asbestos Association. Following the guidance is not compulsory, unless specifically stated and you are free to take other action. But if you do follow the guidance, you will normally be doing enough to comply with the law. Health and Safety inspectors seek to secure compliance and may refer to this guidance.

This guidance is free from copywrite or trademark.

This document is available [here](#)

gutters and dismantling of small AC structures

WHAT NOT TO DO:

1. **DON'T BREAK** asbestos-containing materials.
2. **DON'T WALK ON ASBESTOS ROOFS** as they may collapse.
3. **DON'T USE ORDINARY DUST MASKS**, handkerchiefs or bandannas instead of P2 masks.
4. **DON'T USE ABRASIVE CLEANING** products or materials on surfaces. Only use detergent and a cloth, sponge, a soft brush, broom or standard garden hose.
5. NEVER USE HIGH-PRESSURE WATER CLEANERS OR WATER BLASTERS to clean roofs and other asbestos-containing materials such as internal or external walls.
6. **NEVER USE POWER TOOLS** such as drills or sanders.
7. **DON'T USE ABRASIVE TOOLS** to clean asbestos.
8. **DON'T SCRUB** asbestos materials – this can loosen the surface and release fibres.
9. **DON'T REMOVE ASBESTOS MATERIALS** altogether unless absolutely necessary.
10. **NEVER DISPOSE** of asbestos materials in skips or ANY Council bins (yellow, red or blue) or include it with rubbish or items for kerbside collection.
11. **DON'T BURY** asbestos-containing materials.
12. **DON'T BURN** storm and flood debris as it may contain asbestos materials that can become friable and fibres can become airborne and be inhaled.
13. **NEVER DUMP** asbestos-containing materials – FINES APPLY.

How to manage asbestos risks safely

If you suspect asbestos is on your property or in flood and storm debris, always assume asbestos is present and treat it as if it is asbestos by following these basic steps to ensure its managed safely following storms and floods.

1. **Identify** asbestos-containing materials by visiting Australian Asbestos Awareness website's extensive [Asbestos Products Database](#). You can also refer to the [WorkSafe NZ](#) guide to where asbestos can be found in residential and industrial properties.
2. **ENSURE ALL ELECTRICITY IS TURNED OFF** before starting work where water may contact electrical installations.
3. **Wear PPE** – Full PPE is best but, if you find yourself in an emergency situation and are unable to access full PPE, at the bare minimum, always wear heavy-duty rubber gloves, sturdy footwear and a P2 mask when handling wet asbestos. PPE and P2 masks can be purchased from hardware stores (if available). To find out what you need to know about PPE including how to wear it and dispose of it download the NZDAA's PPE practice note [here](#)
4. **Take care when cleaning** asbestos-containing materials to avoid damage.
5. **Clean** asbestos-containing materials (walls and other materials) by ONLY using garden hoses or by hand. If cleaning by hand, use light pressure and detergent which may be in a trigger spray bottle or bucket.
6. **Check the surface** you are cleaning regularly to ensure it's not being damaged in the process.
7. **After cleaning seal insitu** asbestos-containing materials. For minor cracks in cement products such as external cladding apply PVA glue with a paintbrush or use paint to seal cracks and surface areas.
8. **Temporarily cover debris** with a tarp or sheet or similar. Keep the cover moist and pegged down to the ground or weighed down.
9. **Ensure you only remove broken asbestos-containing materials** such as small pieces that have broken from structures or found in debris.
10. **Separate damaged** asbestos-containing materials from all other debris.
11. **To safely remove or dispose of asbestos, contact a professional asbestos removal company.** NZDAA [LICENCED ASBESTOS REMOVALISTS](#) can be found here.