

# EPA Update: asbestos clean-up in flood-impacted areas

Asbestos materials can be present in flood-affected areas if the buildings were built before 1990.

## Asbestos in flood-affected areas

Asbestos is hazardous but can be managed safely. It could be in the form of flat or corrugated sheets (fibro) used for walls, ceilings and roofing, or in products such as pipes, electrical conduit, eaves or the backing under vinyl flooring.

**A licensed asbestos removalist is the best way to remove asbestos**, but this may not be possible for you right now.

## Safety

Asbestos materials are less of a risk when they are wet. If members of the community find asbestos debris on their property, and a licensed removalist is not an option, they should at a minimum:

- Wear gloves and a P2 mask (not an ordinary paper mask or bandanna).
- Wear protective overalls or a shirt with long sleeves and trousers.
- Pick up (don't sweep) the pieces of asbestos and place in a thick plastic bag, together with the gloves and face mask when finished.
- Knot the top of the plastic bag when finished.

- Place the knotted plastic bag into a second empty plastic bag and knot the top.
- Label the bag as asbestos materials.
- Wash and clean hands thoroughly with soap and water.

This advice and more is available on the [NSW Government's asbestos website](#).

## Handling of asbestos

You can remove asbestos materials that are already broken and dislodged. **DO NOT** cut or break asbestos materials – this may release fibres that you and others can breathe in. If there is damage, we strongly recommend getting a licensed asbestos professional in.

If you are cleaning asbestos materials in your house, use a domestic hose, soapy water and a light sponge, cloth or soft brush. Don't use a high-pressure water cleaner because this can release asbestos fibres.

It is important to remember to keep asbestos waste separated from other waste. Do not put it in the red-lid bin or general waste skip bins. This is important to keep the community, volunteers and clean-up crews safe.

The community should follow advice from the local emergency services or council on where to put separated waste in preparation for it to be removed. Clean-up contractors engaged by the NSW Government have been briefed about a range of hazardous materials you might come across, including asbestos, gas bottles, household chemicals etc. They have procedures in place to handle these wastes appropriately.

If homes have asbestos that has been disturbed or damaged then it is recommended that residents find somewhere else to stay until the asbestos has been safely managed by a licensed removalist.

## Further assistance

Further information about potential asbestos or other hazards in homes or in public spaces in flood-affected areas can be obtained by:

- calling 1800 ASBESTOS (1800 272 378)
- visiting the EPA website for more updates regarding asbestos and flood related clean-up:  
<https://www.epa.nsw.gov.au/news/news/2022/nsw-storm-and-flood-updates-2022>
- Visiting the SafeWork NSW website for information about the range of hazards that can be encountered following floods and where to find a licensed removalist:  
<https://www.safework.nsw.gov.au/resource-library/blogs/blogs-accordions/dealing-with-a-natural-disaster>
- Visiting the NSW Government's asbestos website to find out what asbestos may look like, where it could be in your home and how to best manage it after a flood:  
<https://www.asbestos.nsw.gov.au/>.

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### NSW Environment Protection Authority

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