

ASBESTOS

Asbestos was commonly used in building materials from the 1940s until the mid-1990s and was not totally banned until 31 December 2003. The inhalation of asbestos fibres, as well as ash, dust and other particulates resulting from the recent bushfires may result in serious diseases. Exposure to asbestos and other particulate matter should be avoided.

It is important that people returning to their bushfire affected properties, as well as volunteers and other people attending bushfire affected areas be aware of the risks and take appropriate precautions.

It is estimated that at least one in every three buildings constructed between the 1940s and 1990s contain asbestos products. Asbestos may be found in a number of products, including:

- roofing and shingles
- under eaves
- exterior wall cladding
- interior walls and wet areas
- fencing
- thermal boards around fireplaces and in switch boards
- backing material on floor tiles and vinyl flooring
- gaskets and seals in wood stoves
- textured paint
- garages and workshops
- brakes, clutches and gaskets of cars
- insulation used on hot water pipes, hot water cylinders, domestic heaters and stoves.

What does asbestos look like?

It is very difficult to identify asbestos by looking at it. If you are uncertain about what a substance is, you should treat it as though it contains asbestos. The only way to be certain is to have a sample analysed by a laboratory. A licensed asbestos removalist or occupational hygienist may also help identify materials containing asbestos.

What should I do if I find asbestos?

If you are concerned about any asbestos at your property you should contact a licensed asbestos removalist who can assist you. A list of licensed removalists can be found on the Workplace Standards Tasmania website at www.workplacestandards.tas.gov.au or by contacting the Workplace Standards Helpline on 1300 366 322.

May I remove and clean up asbestos from my property?

It is recommended that you contact a licensed asbestos removalist if you are considering cleaning up fire damaged areas suspected of containing asbestos.

For your health and safety it is recommended that you use the correct safety equipment, including: