

Fact sheet

Safe Management of Asbestos in Disasters – Asbestos in Storms

July 2026

When asbestos-containing materials are damaged or displaced by storms they can become friable and require careful management.

Asbestos is generally defined as:

Friable – when dry can be crumbled, pulverised or reduced to a powder by hand pressure. It has a high health risk.

Non-friable – when dry cannot be crumbled, pulverised or reduced to a powder by hand pressure. It is mixed with cement or other hard bonding materials. It has a lower health risk. However non-friable asbestos can become friable if significantly damaged or in poor condition.

Broken or displaced asbestos-containing material during storm events are generally not considered friable. Asbestos-containing materials damaged by crushing on a hard surface such as roads and driveways may become friable. When wet asbestos-containing materials are damaged and then dry, they can release fibres into the air.

Before a storm

As extreme weather events become more frequent and severe, proactive management and timely removal of asbestos-containing materials can help reduce risks.

If you know or think a storm may be coming

Check your property for any damaged or loose asbestos-containing materials. Asbestos-containing materials can be found in many parts of homes built before 1990 including roofing, ceilings and internal and external walls, eaves, fencing, flue and water pipes, fireplaces, behind tiles and in flooring underlay.

If possible, remove any large tree branches that overhang asbestos roofing.

Any loose pieces of asbestos-containing materials should be carefully collected using personal protective equipment, double wrapped in thick plastic and disposed of at your local asbestos disposal point. Check with your local council if you are unsure where that is.

Using a licensed asbestos removalist is the best way to remove asbestos-containing materials.

After a storm

We know disasters can be stressful and unpredictable, and licensed asbestos professionals may not be immediately available. Please be reassured that it's safest to leave asbestos where it is or keep it contained until a professional can help.

After a storm event, you may find wet pieces of fibro on your driveway and road outside your home, where it is likely to be crushed or disturbed, or on your lawn where it might be mowed. All fibro should be treated with caution.

The only way to correctly identify asbestos-containing materials is to contact a licensed asbestos assessor or occupational hygienist. In some cases, emergency services may help to arrange this assessment.

We strongly recommend that you use a licensed asbestos professional to remove asbestos safely; however, you can remove some small amounts yourself. Removal of less than 10 square metres of non-friable asbestos-containing materials does not require a licensed asbestos removalist but still poses a health risk unless appropriate precautions are taken, including the use of personal protective equipment.

Never use ordinary paper dust masks, handkerchiefs or bandannas. Wear a P2 face mask and protective clothing (heavy-duty gloves and disposable coveralls). It is important to use personal protective equipment correctly, put it on and take it off in the correct order, and dispose of your personal protective equipment with the asbestos waste after use. Correct transport and disposal of asbestos waste is essential.

Building rubble should not be buried, as it may contain hazardous materials.

Do:

- take care when cleaning the surface of asbestos-containing materials to avoid damage and the release of asbestos fibres
- clean undamaged walls and other surfaces that has asbestos-containing materials using low pressure water hoses or by hand using light pressure and detergent
- regularly check the surface of the material you are cleaning to ensure it is not being damaged
- seal any small fractured or exposed edges with paint or PVA glue for asbestos-containing materials still in their original form and location
- wet fibro with a mist during its removal. Take care on roofs because asbestos roofing can be brittle and is slippery when wet, and should not be walked on.

Don't:

- use power tools or any abrasive materials such as angle grinders, sanders, saws or high-speed drills
- cut into a fibro sheet. Instead remove the entire sheet and replace it with a non-asbestos product
- break asbestos-containing materials because asbestos fibres can be released. Only remove asbestos-containing materials that are already broken, dislodged, or found in debris
- use compressed air to clean down any surfaces contaminated with asbestos. This only disperses fibres into the air

- use brooms to sweep up materials that may contain asbestos, as this may release airborne asbestos fibres
- remove asbestos-containing materials unless necessary
- walk on corrugated asbestos-containing materials roofs, as they may be brittle
- clean asbestos-containing materials roofs and other asbestos-containing materials using high pressure water cleaners or water blasters because this can release asbestos fibres
- dispose of asbestos-containing materials waste into bins or with items for kerbside collection.

If sending asbestos-containing material to a waste facility straight after a disaster is not possible, it can be stored temporarily. Once safely wrapped, place it in a separate pile, keep it securely covered, appropriately labelled and store it away from busy areas. Follow advice from the local emergency services or council about where to place asbestos for waste collection.

If you are transporting asbestos waste, it must be correctly wrapped and covered. Your vehicle must be able to contain the waste materials to avoid any dust or debris escaping during transit.

Commercial and non-residential properties should have an asbestos register. The property owner, manager or contractor will be your best contact for more information on the locations of asbestos-containing materials risks and hazards.

Naturally occurring asbestos

Naturally occurring asbestos may also pose a risk if disturbed or uncovered during floods and heavy rains. If you live or work in a region where asbestos is known to occur naturally, see more information on [naturally occurring asbestos](#).

Information sources

Local Council – Contact your local council to find out where to dispose of asbestos-containing materials waste in your area. It's best to phone ahead to confirm the licensed waste facility can accept your asbestos waste and contaminated personal protective equipment. Your council may also have asbestos management advice for you to follow.

NSW Environment Protection Authority – visit the EPA website to find facilities that accept asbestos waste, www.epa.nsw.gov.au/your-environment/household-building-and-renovation/dealing-with-household-asbestos/facilities-accept-household-asbestos, and information on transport and disposal of hazardous materials, www.epa.nsw.gov.au/Your-environment/Household-building-and-renovation/dealing-with-household-asbestos).

NSW Health – For details around the health risks associated with asbestos, see [NSW Health](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/environment/factsheets/Pages/asbestos-and-health-risks.aspx) (www.health.nsw.gov.au/environment/factsheets/Pages/asbestos-and-health-risks.aspx).

SafeWork NSW – For up-to-date information on the safe handling of asbestos, finding an asbestos professional, identifying asbestos and proper personal protective equipment, see [SafeWork NSW](http://www.safework.nsw.gov.au/hazards-a-z/asbestos) (www.safework.nsw.gov.au/hazards-a-z/asbestos).

Service NSW – For disaster preparation and recovery support for individuals and businesses, see www.service.nsw.gov.au/services/emergencies-and-natural-disasters.

Important note:

The information provided above is general in nature and intended as a quick reference during or following a storm. It does not replace site-specific advice. Always follow current directions from emergency services and relevant authorities and contact a licensed professional if you are unsure about asbestos risks.