

# Asbestos cement material following a bushfire

**You may have damaged asbestos on your property following a bushfire. This will mostly be asbestos cement sheeting (fences, walls, roofs, eaves).**

**You should not enter a property that contains burnt asbestos.**

Burnt or friable asbestos sheets and material containing asbestos presents a health hazard and exposure to airborne asbestos fibres will be extremely high.

If in doubt, treat flat or corrugated cement sheeting from buildings built prior to 1990, as asbestos until confirmed otherwise.

## Important information to remember:

- During a fire asbestos often shatters from the heat and releases flakes of asbestos cement around the property.
  - If damaged material is disturbed in a way that generates dust asbestos fibres can be released and inhaled into the lungs. Inhalation of asbestos fibres must be minimised to prevent asbestos-related diseases such as mesothelioma.
  - It is possible that asbestos material from adjacent properties may contaminate your premises
  - Following the fire, emergency services, local governments and environmental and health agencies take interim measures to prevent disturbance of asbestos contamination. These include:
    - erecting temporary fencing if practical
- install asbestos warning signs
  - cleaning of priority traffic areas and
  - evacuation of adjacent buildings (in rare occasions)
- It is important that your property is assessed, and controlled clean-up is done by an asbestos removalist with an unrestricted license.
- If necessary and safe to do so, owners properly equipped with Personal Protective Equipment and Clothing (PPEC), may visit the site to reclaim personal effects with supervision. PPEC includes:
  - Well-fitting P2 or N95 mask / respirator
  - Disposable coveralls – if available or old clothes that can be disposed of later
  - Disposable gloves or waterproof ones that can be promptly washed
  - Disposable shoe covers – if available or waterproof shoes that can be cleaned



- You should not attempt to remove and dispose of burnt asbestos yourself.

### **Small scale bushfires / property fires**

- The organisation of the assessment and clean-up of asbestos contamination in smaller property fires is usually the responsibility of the property owner.
- The Local Government Environmental Health Officer (LG EHO) is usually the relevant regulatory authority under the *Health (Asbestos) Regulations 1992*, and supervises the clean-up process to ensure clean-up is correctly managed.

### **Large scale bushfires**

In large bushfires that require a multi-agency response and result in significant cost impacts to communities, the [Western Australian Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements](#) may take charge of some or all of the clean-up and work with emergency and response agencies, and the Local Government Environmental Health Officer to manage risks.

### **Asbestos professionals**

For a list of Occupational Hygienists, who may be able to advise on site management, refer to the Australian Institute of Occupational Hygienists [www.aioh.org.au](http://www.aioh.org.au)

### **Licensed asbestos removalists**

For a removalist with the required unrestricted license refer to:

[www.commerce.wa.gov.au/worksafe/finding-and-selecting-asbestos-licence-holder](http://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/worksafe/finding-and-selecting-asbestos-licence-holder)

## **Further information**

Refer to the HealthyWA website:

[healthywa.wa.gov.au/Articles/A\\_E/After-a-bushfire-hazards-on-your-property](http://healthywa.wa.gov.au/Articles/A_E/After-a-bushfire-hazards-on-your-property)

Other factsheets include:

- Health hazards after a bushfire
- Ash from CCA treated timber after a bushfire
- Swimming pool contamination after a bushfire
- Damaged chemicals, poisons or pesticides after a bushfire
- On-site wastewater damaged after a bushfire
- Rainwater tanks after a bushfire

To discuss further:

- Call the Environmental Health Directorate, Department of Health WA on (08) 9222 2000 or email [ehinfo@health.wa.gov.au](mailto:ehinfo@health.wa.gov.au)
- Contact your local government Environmental Health Officer

**This document can be made available in alternative formats on request for a person with disability.**

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[healthywa.wa.gov.au](http://healthywa.wa.gov.au)