

Asbestos hazards following a cyclone or flooding

- **Broken or cracked asbestos sheets and material containing asbestos presents a hazard, but exposure to airborne asbestos fibres will be extremely low because they are still strongly bound in a cement matrix.**
- **Nevertheless, owners must take precautions to protect themselves and not to break-up and spread asbestos material on their property.**
- **If in doubt, treat corrugated cement material from buildings built prior to 1990, as asbestos.**
- **Any asbestos debris should be assessed and removed by a licensed asbestos removalist rather than the owner, except for limited amounts of material.**
- **If you see any damaged asbestos on roadways, do not drive over it. Report the contamination to local government to ensure safe removal.**

You may have damaged asbestos on your property. This will mostly be broken panels, pieces or fragments of asbestos sheeting (fences, walls, eaves).

Since the asbestos is still strongly bonded it poses a **very low risk**, but that material must be carefully handled to minimise possible fibre release and properly removed as soon as practicable to avoid an increase in risk over time.

In general, emergency management authorities or the local government will organise specialised asbestos removalists for asbestos clean-up (for large scale damage), so you don't have to touch it.

If you decide to clean-up and remove the bonded asbestos sheets and fragments on your property you can do this if you follow the precautions below.

Note: If the asbestos can be easily broken when you touch it you need to leave it alone. This means it is becoming friable and will need to be removed by specialist removalists.

Reasonable measures for cleaning-up bonded asbestos sheets and fragments:

1. Make sure you are wearing adequate personal protective clothing. This includes:
2. P2 or N95 mask / respirator
 - a. Disposable coveralls – if available or old clothes that can be disposed of later
 - b. Disposable gloves or rubber ones that can be promptly washed
 - c. Disposable shoe covers – if available or hard cover shoes that can be cleaned
3. Do not break or crush the asbestos when you are moving it or slide sheets over each other.
4. If the material is drying out, keep it wet by lightly hosing with water before moving it.
5. Carefully place the asbestos material in 200um plastic bags (heavy duty) or wrap using rolls of 200um thick plastic.
6. If you are placing the asbestos in plastic bags they should NOT be more than half full. Tightly twist the bag opening and fold over to form a goose neck and secure with heavy duty duct tape. Finally place that bag inside another one (double bag), seal and label 'DANGER ASBESTOS WASTE'.

7. If you are using rolls of plastic make sure you only wrap the equivalent of a single fence sheet for each wrapping. Double wrap, seal with duct tape and label 'DANGER ASBESTOS WASTE'.
8. Promptly dispose of wrapped asbestos according to the requirements of your local government or emergency advice provided by response agencies.

Further information

Refer to the HealthyWA website:

healthywa.wa.gov.au/Articles/F_I/Hazards-after-cyclones-and-floods

Other factsheets include:

- Clean-up following a cyclone or flooding
- Damaged chemicals, poisons and pesticides following a cyclone or flooding
- Damaged on-site wastewater systems after a cyclone or flooding

To discuss further:

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

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