



## 1. Purpose

The purposes of this information sheet is to provide guidance and raise awareness of the dangers associated with asbestos, and obligations that Persons Conducting a Business or Undertaking (PCBU's) have with regards to the identification of asbestos.

## 2. Asbestos

Asbestos is a naturally occurring mineral made up of many small fibres. There are six primary sub-classifications associated with asbestos; chrysotile, crocidolite, amosite, anthophyllite, tremolite, and actinolite. The most common sub-classifications are chrysotile and amosite.

Although the fibres in asbestos are microscopic in nature, the material has excellent electrical insulation properties and is highly resistant to heat, which meant it was used as one of the building materials of choice for many years. The use of asbestos sharply declined in the late 1970's when it became evident asbestos was a serious health hazard and is currently classified as a known human carcinogen.

Asbestos containing material (ACM) is considered to be "friable" when it is dry, and can be crumbled, pulverised, or reduced to a powder by hand pressure. If it can't, ACM is considered "non-friable", however asbestos can easily become "friable" when the asbestos fibres are exposed to grinding, chipping, demolishing, or retrofitting of asbestos products. Each of these processes could potentially release asbestos into the air where it would be easily inhaled, and can lead to an increased risk of asbestosis, lung cancer, and mesothelioma.

Examples of situations where asbestos may be discovered include, but not limited to, building renovations, refurbishments and or the process of managing relocatable homes.

## 3. Asbestos Contained in Buildings

As a general guide, buildings constructed before 2000 may have asbestos or asbestos containing material (ACM).

Asbestos can be found in many building materials, including but not limited to the locations illustrated in the following picture, as referred to by WorkSafe NZ.

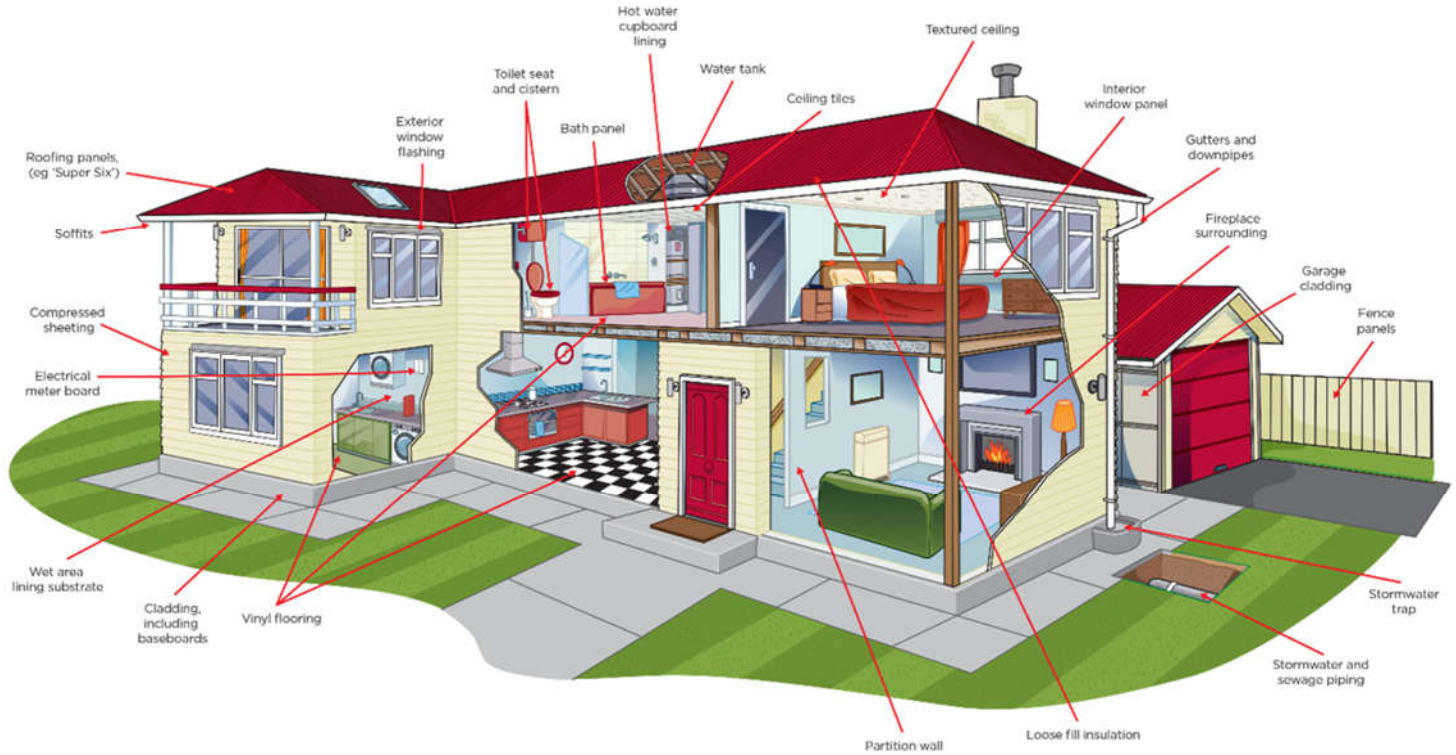
<https://worksafe.govt.nz/topic-and-industry/asbestos/working-with-asbestos/where-asbestos-can-be-found/>

Asbestos locations in a residential house:

Document Ref:	Document Name:	Version	QAM Author	Release Date	Review Date	Page
3120.11	Form Asbestos Management & Removal_famr	1	QAM	December 2019	December 2021	1 of 3

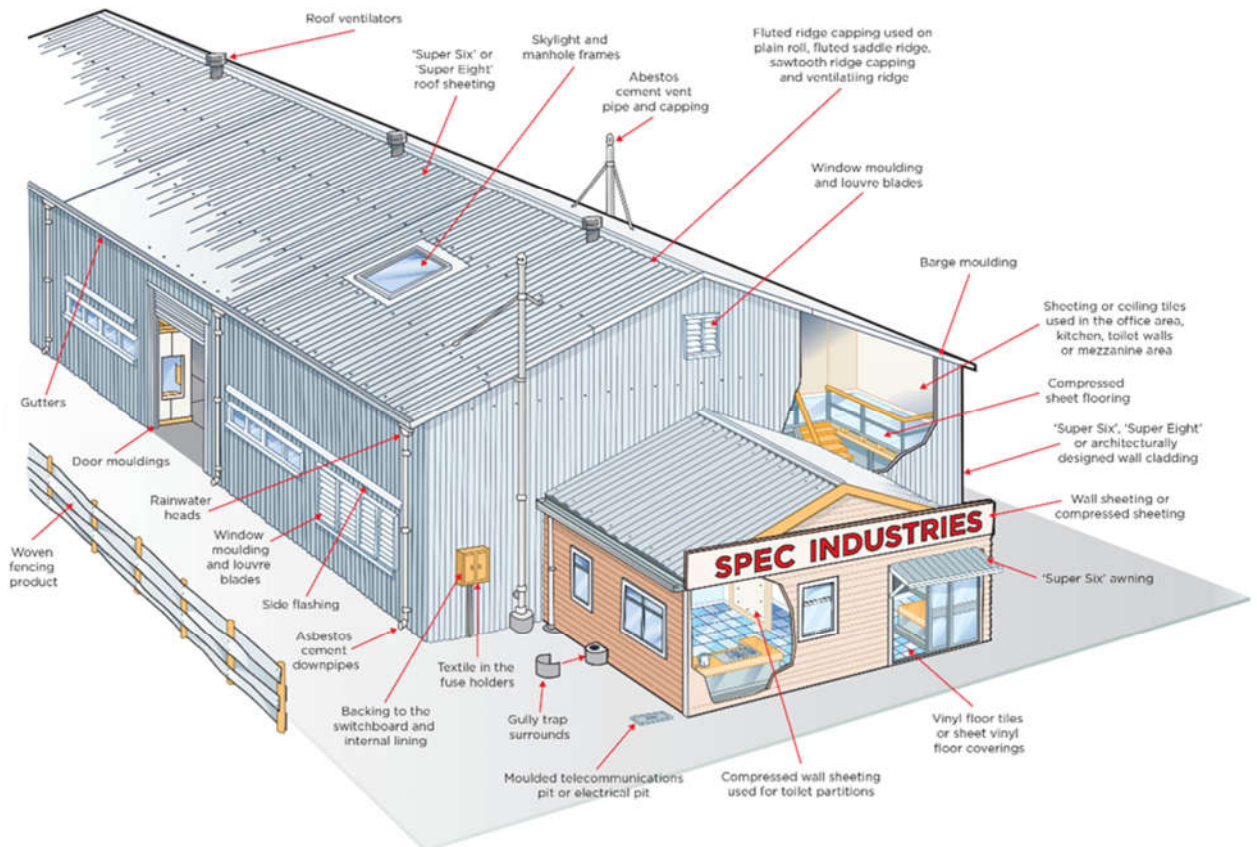


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**Asbestos locations in an industrial building:**

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Document Ref:	Document Name:	Version	QAM Author	Release Date	Review Date	Page
3120.11	Form Asbestos Management & Removal_famr	1	QAM	December 2019	December 2021	2 of 3



Strict procedures must be followed if asbestos is discovered during construction. Work methods, equipment and safety procedures must be in accordance with the New Zealand Guidelines for the Management and Removal of Asbestos.

<https://worksafe.govt.nz/topic-and-industry/asbestos/management-and-removal-of-asbestos/>

Regardless of the circumstances, it is essential that an asbestos removal plan is developed by a Certified Asbestos Remover and implemented whenever any asbestos-contaminated material is to be removed. Asbestos may only be removed by a person holding this license, and the licensed contractor must notify WorkSafe NZ when such work is being carried out.

**Note:** WorkSafe NZ is only responsible if work is carried out by contractors; WorkSafe NZ cannot get involved if work is being undertaken by a homeowner.

Homeowner's are often unaware of the existence of asbestos and the serious health risks its removal brings. Materials containing asbestos are often brittle and break easily; if disturbed fibres are released into the atmosphere and can be breathed in up to 30 days after its removal.

Fibre cement sheets containing asbestos are not a health hazard if they are painted and in sound condition. However, unpainted, broken or friable sheets are dangerous and should only be removed by a Certified Asbestos Remover.

Laboratory tests can generally be conducted on materials on the same day. Kaipara District Council strongly recommends that you contact a Certified Asbestos Remover before carrying out any demolition or construction on pre-2000 building stock.

#### 4. The Need for an Asbestos Management Plan

A Person Conducting a Business or Undertaking (PCBU) must ensure an asbestos management plan is in place for a structure where asbestos is found or is likely to be present at a workplace from time to time.

Having an asbestos management plan will ensure that a PCBU can manage risks in situations where people at the property – such as workers, tenants, clients or other visitors – could be exposed to respirable asbestos fibres (fibres able to be breathed in).

#### 5. Further References

[WorkSafe NZ](https://www.worksafe.govt.nz/) – 0800 030 040

##### Health and Safety in Employment (Asbestos) Regulations 1998

<http://www.legislation.govt.nz/regulation/public/1998/0443/latest/DLM269298.html>

##### Ministry of Health

<https://www.health.govt.nz/your-health/healthy-living/environmental-health/hazardous-substances/asbestos>

##### Register of Licensed Asbestos Removers

<https://worksafe.govt.nz/topic-and-industry/asbestos/licensing/licence-holder-register/>

Document Ref:	Document Name:	Version	QAM Author	Release Date	Review Date	Page
3120.11	Form Asbestos Management & Removal_famr	1	QAM	December 2019	December 2021	3 of 3