



Your guide to

# Hiring an **Asbestos Abatement** Company

**WorkSafe**  
**SASKATCHEWAN**  
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## Your guide to hiring an asbestos abatement company

Hiring an asbestos abatement company, and not doing it yourself, is the wisest and safest decision when it comes to removing asbestos from any residential, commercial or public building.

An asbestos consultant will properly test for the toxic mineral and can recommend a reliable asbestos abatement company. An asbestos abatement company will follow strict asbestos abatement regulations and processes and carry the right abatement removal equipment to keep them, others and you safe from the deadly carcinogen.

*This guide was adapted from [www.Asbestos.com](http://www.Asbestos.com).*

# Asbestos kills. Understand the dangers.

The import, sale and use of asbestos, as well as the manufacture, import, sale and use of products containing asbestos, has been banned in Canada since Dec. 30, 2018, with some exceptions. However, asbestos-containing materials still pose a danger to the public, because they were common building products in homes, schools and other structures built before 1990, but could be present in several non-friable materials after the 1990s.

Breathing in asbestos fibres can cause serious health issues such as lung cancer, asbestosis and mesothelioma. These asbestos-related lung diseases are the leading cause of work-related fatalities in Saskatchewan.

Asbestos abatement involves the identification, removal, repair and encapsulation of materials or products in a structure to eliminate the threat of exposure to toxic asbestos fibres. It's best handled by a professional asbestos abatement company.

## Common asbestos-containing materials in buildings

Because asbestos doesn't burn, it was used in many products to resist heat. The "miracle mineral" made these asbestos-containing materials valuable to the building industry. Some examples of these materials include:



Built up roofing and felts, roof shingles/siding



Vermiculite insulation, ceiling tiles and coatings



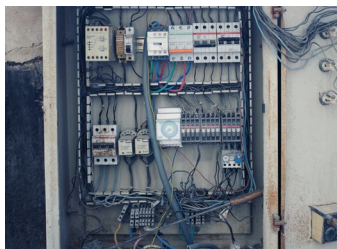
Popcorn ceilings



Drywall and cement sheets



Plaster, putties and caulking



Electrical switchboard panels



Plumbing insulation



Pipe and duct coverings



Thermal boiler and fireplace insulations



Vinyl sheet flooring, floor levelling compound, floor tiles



## Reasons for testing a structure for asbestos

Although asbestos-containing products are generally safe when left undisturbed, they become brittle over time and can crumble. The popularity of do-it-yourself (DIY) projects has heightened possible asbestos exposure.

- ▶ **DIY remodelling projects.**
- ▶ **Structure damaged by a natural or human-made disaster.**
- ▶ **Structure was built before 1990.**
- ▶ **Crumbled, worn or broken asbestos-containing materials in a building.**

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Unfortunately, asbestos-related fatalities continue to dominate Saskatchewan statistics. It's one of the invisible hazards every worker, homeowner and business owner needs to be aware of. It's important they know what is expected of them before any construction is started on an existing building.

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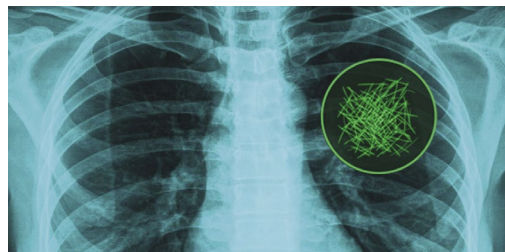
–Collin Pullar, *Saskatchewan Construction Safety Association (SCSA) president*

# Why is asbestos abatement important?

If asbestos-containing materials are not properly removed by an asbestos abatement company, they can endanger your life and the lives of others who come into contact with asbestos dust, fibres or raw asbestos materials.

## Fast facts about asbestos

- Inhaling or ingesting asbestos can lead to serious health issues such as mesothelioma cancer, asbestosis, pleural plaques and asbestos lung cancer.
- In 2020, 45 per cent of work-related fatalities recorded by the Saskatchewan Workers' Compensation Board (SWCB) were caused by occupational diseases.
- Microscopic asbestos fibres are .01 microns thick (18,000 times thinner than a human hair).



## Steps to take if you suspect asbestos contamination

The most important first step is to not touch the suspicious materials. Let a professional asbestos abatement company handle the job.



Don't sweep, vacuum or dust possible asbestos debris.



Don't remove suspicious materials.



Keep everyone out of the area.



Limit activities in the area.



Call a trained and qualified asbestos abatement company with trained asbestos personnel.



## Tips for hiring an asbestos abatement company

In Saskatchewan, asbestos abatement regulations fall under [\*The Occupational Health and Safety Regulations, 2020\*](#). Before hiring an asbestos abatement company, find the one that best suits your needs.

**Asbestos abatement contractors should be willing to produce the following documentation as part of the tendering process:**

- required business licenses
- worker training records
- WCB clearance letter
- insurance covering asbestos exposure (at least \$1,000,000 liability)
- asbestos control plans in place for the job
- recent references from similar past work
- health and safety program
- sample testing procedure and laboratory used for analysis
- safety or quality certifications held by the company (COR, ISO 9001, etc.), if applicable

**Other questions to ask an asbestos abatement contractor:**

- How long have you been in business?
- Do you have sufficient resources to complete the described work?
- What is the timeline for this work from start to finish?
- How will safety be monitored on this project (safety personnel, supervisor, etc.)?
- What is the frequency of workplace inspections?
- What professional certifications do the workers and supervisors have?
- Will any of the work be subcontracted, and do these organizations meet the same requirements listed in this document?

**Asbestos abatement workers should be trained in:**

- pre-asbestos abatement activities
- work area preparation
- establishing decontamination units
- using personal protection (respirator and protective clothing)
- worker decontamination procedures
- safety considerations in abatement area
- proper handling and disposal of asbestos waste

# Types of asbestos abatement processes

## Low-risk asbestos processes:

- The installation or removal of manufactured asbestos-containing products where sanding, cutting or similar disturbance is not required.
- The use of hand tools to cut, shape, drill or remove a manufactured asbestos-containing product.
- The removal of drywall material where asbestos joint-filling compounds have been used.
- The use of personal protective equipment made of asbestos-containing textiles.
- The transporting or handling of asbestos-containing materials in sealed containers.
- The cleaning or disposing of minor amounts of asbestos debris that has come loose or fallen from a friable surface.
- The removal of small samples of asbestos-containing material for the purpose of identification.

## Moderate-risk asbestos processes:

- The use of a power tool equipped with high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filtration to cut, shape or grind any asbestos-containing surface or product.
- The removal of a false ceiling, or part of a false ceiling, where friable asbestos-containing material is, or is likely to be, lying on the surface of the false ceiling.
- The removal, encapsulation, enclosure or disturbance of minor amounts of friable asbestos-containing material during the repair, alteration, maintenance, demolition or dismantling of a structure, machine or equipment, or part of a structure, machine or equipment.

## High-risk asbestos processes:

- The removal, encapsulation, enclosure or disturbance of anything but minor amounts of friable asbestos-containing material during the repair, alteration, maintenance, demolition or dismantling of any part of a plant.
- The cleaning, maintenance or removal of air-handling equipment in buildings where sprayed fireproofing asbestos-containing materials have been applied to the airways or ventilation ducts.
- The dismantling or the major alteration or repair of a boiler, furnace, kiln or similar device, or part of a boiler, furnace, kiln or similar device, that is made of asbestos-containing materials.
- The use of power tools not equipped with HEPA filtration to grind, cut or abrade any asbestos-containing surface or product.
- High-risk asbestos abatement projects have additional regulatory requirements as stated on page 7.

# Asbestos abatement process

Abatement begins with a competent person taking samples of suspected asbestos-containing material. Samples are analyzed at an accredited laboratory to determine the extent of the problem. Asbestos removal can be complex and includes several site preparations.

- Establish work area.
- Disable heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) and electrical systems.
- Alternate electrical power source may be used to power negative air pressure units that avoid contamination of air outside work ground fault interrupter (GFI) panels.
- Install decontamination enclosure systems.
- Seal openings with polyethylene sheets having a minimum six-mil thickness and duct tape.
- Wet wipe or use a vacuum with a HEPA filter on non-movable objects to keep asbestos from becoming airborne.
- Seal non-movable objects with polyethylene sheets having a minimum six-mil thickness and duct tape.
- Cover surface not getting abated with plastic sheeting.
- Post warning signs for asbestos-containing material that read: DANGER: CONTAINS ASBESTOS FIBRES. CANCER AND LUNG DISEASE HAZARD. DO NOT DISTURB.
- Post warning signs where routine maintenance is performed on asbestos-containing material that read: CAUTION, ASBESTOS. DO NOT DISTURB WITHOUT PROPER TRAINING, EQUIPMENT AND AUTHORITY.
- Clean up using a HEPA vacuum and wet wiping.
- Disposal requires double-bagging asbestos-containing waste and sealing it in two six-mil polyethylene bags that are leak-tight while still wet. Clearly label those bags and take them to qualified landfills with specific requirements for securing the waste and preventing fibres from escaping into the air. Vehicles that transport the waste to the landfill have specific requirements and labelling instructions.

## Additional requirements for high-risk asbestos abatement projects

- Contractors must notify the Ministry of Labour Relations and Workplace Safety 14 days before beginning all high-risk asbestos abatement projects.
- Once the abatement project is completed, no one may enter the work area without appropriate respiratory protection until a qualified professional determines that the area is clear of all visible debris and air monitoring verifies that airborne asbestos fibre concentrations are less than 0.01 fibres per cubic centimetre of air.
- On high-risk asbestos abatement projects, workers wear full-face powered respirators and a shower is included in the decontamination enclosure.

## Common asbestos abatement equipment

Here is some of the equipment you may see on the job.



HEPA vacuum



Respirator



Eyewear



Disposable gloves



Disposable coveralls



Rubber boots



The asbestos ban was a great step forward for Canada, but the sad legacy of asbestos is that we will continue to see cancers due to exposure in the past for decades to come. The only way to begin to prevent these cancers, when so much asbestos remains in our built environment, is to keep educating people about its danger and pushing prevention efforts.



– Paul A. Demers, *Director, Occupational Cancer Research Centre, Ontario Health*

# Asbestos abatement options

Removal, enclosure and encapsulation can be used separately or in combination. If enclosure or encapsulation is used and asbestos-containing materials remain in place, an asbestos management program will be required for the building.



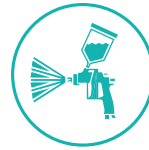
## Removal

Removing asbestos can include either partial or complete removal of asbestos from your building.



## Enclosure

Enclosing asbestos behind a physical barrier such as a solid wall or bulkhead can prevent the accidental disturbance of these materials.



## Encapsulation

Encapsulating asbestos involves the application of a sealant to the surface of asbestos-containing materials to prevent or minimize the release of asbestos fibres.

This process is not recommended on highly friable surfaces because of the risk of fibre release during sealant application.



## Asbestos management program

An asbestos management program (AMP) uses inspections and policies to prevent the release of asbestos fibres into occupied areas of a building. An AMP identifies and manages asbestos-containing materials in a building. It can be used for asbestos-containing materials that do not pose a risk or for materials that remain after other abatement options have reduced the potential for exposure.

## Do your homework

Now that you understand some of the intricacies of asbestos, its dangers to you and others, as well as the importance of properly removing it from a structure, you are better equipped to make the right decision.

Research asbestos abatement companies, ask for references and ask how they remove asbestos from properties. You, your loved ones and the general public will be far safer when the threat of asbestos exposure is properly eliminated.

### Documentation to reference for asbestos projects:

[The Occupational Health and Safety Regulations, 2020](#)

[Saskatchewan asbestos abatement manual, 2017](#)

[Safe Work Procedure Bulk Asbestos Sampling, 2021](#)

[Safe Work Procedure Conducting Asbestos Surveys, 2021](#)

Discuss your options with an asbestos consultant or an asbestos abatement company before work begins.