

## Blog – Asbestos

Asbestos, known to be a health hazard, is still found in materials in homes and buildings around New Zealand. It is very often hidden in the materials. If your house was built or renovated before 1990, there is a chance it contains asbestos. Once hailed as a “miracle materials” asbestos is now recognised as one of the deadliest materials commonly used in pre 1990s building materials used in the construction of buildings.

Asbestos was valued for its strength, fire resistance, and insulation values. When left undisturbed and encapsulated in the building, the risks of health impact are thought to be low to negligible, however the danger lies in what happens when it is disturbed. When removing materials during alterations, renovations and or deconstruction, the materials with asbestos in them, release microscopic fibres that become airborne. Once airborne, the microfibres can be inhaled deep into the lungs. They are not visible, have no taste or smell, subsequently, people are unaware they are harming themselves. Once fibres are inside the human body, they never leave. The health impacts may not become apparent until years later. The microfibres in the human body cause mesothelioma, lung cancer, and asbestosis.

Materials asbestos can sometimes be found in, but not limited to: -

- Corrugated fibrolite roofing
- Roof tiles
- Wall linings and textured ceilings
- Fibrolite soffit linings
- Fibrolite wall claddings (Shadowline, flat fibrolite sheet, highline etc.
- Sheathing around old electric cables
- Some floor vinyls.

Removal must be carried out by licensed professionals. Do not attempt to remove, sand, deconstruct and demolish yourself. This may result in contamination of your home, furnishings, and clothing.

If you own a home that is pre-1990, and are considering renovations or alterations, homeowners should contact a professional and have materials tested to confirm whether there is asbestos present and take advice on what to do. Professionals are trained and experienced in terms of removal, handling disposal procedures that ensure the right best practise, and methodologies are used to ensure protecting occupiers, your family, and your community.