Building Consent Practical Note

Asbestos removal

Purpose

To provide guidance and raise awareness of the dangers associated with asbestos.

Background information

Asbestos refers to a set of six naturally occurring fibrous minerals. Asbestos has six primary sub-classification, chrysotile, crocidolite, amosite, anthophyllite, tremolite and actinolite. Chrysolite and amosite asbestos are most common.

Although asbestos fibres are microscopic in nature, they are extremely durable and resistant to fire and most chemical reactions and breakdowns. These properties of asbestos were the reasons that supported its use for many years in different commercial and industrial capabilities.

The strength of asbestos, combined with its resistance to heat, allowed it to become the material of choice in a variety of products, including but not limited to:

- roofing shingles
- floor tiles
- ceiling materials
- cement compounds
- textile products
- automotive parts

Asbestos is now strictly regulated as exposure to this toxic mineral can now be directly and scientifically linked to a number of lung and respiratory health conditions.

The use of asbestos sharply declined in the late 1970's when it became evident that asbestos posed a threat to human health and safety. Today, asbestos is classified as a known human carcinogen.

Asbestos microscopic fibres are approximately .02 the diameter of a human hair and easily inhaled allowing the fibres to attach to the respiratory system including the lining of the lung and inner cavity tissue. The asbestos fibres are rigid which means it becomes lodged in the soft internal tissue of the respiratory system and are not easily expelled or to broken-down by the body.

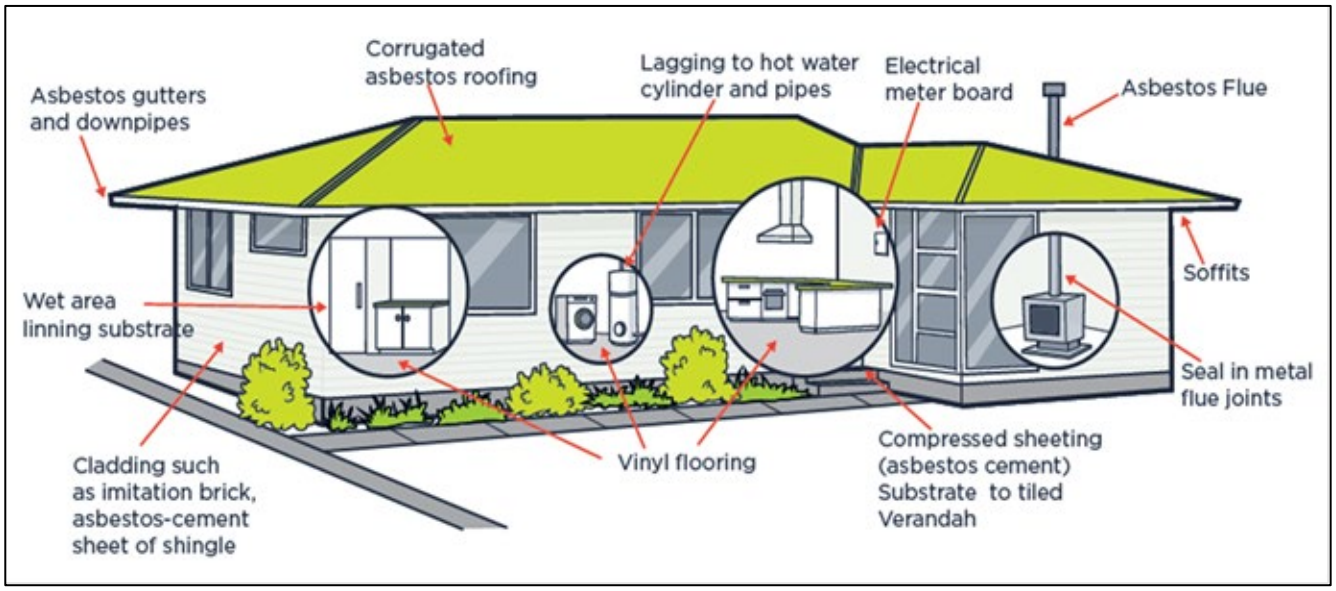
While exposure to asbestos is hazardous, not all asbestos products are inherently hazardous. Either the loose asbestos fibres or airborne fibres are a true hazard and could be inhaled to represent a health risk (a condition known as friable). Stable asbestos compounds such as cement, tiles or other products are generally not an immediate hazard unless grinding, chipping, demolishing them releases asbestos fibres into the air. These methods create friable asbestos fibres which can be easily inhaled.

Building likely to contain asbestos

As a general rule, if a building was constructed:

- Before mid-1980s, it is **very likely** to have materials containing asbestos
- Between mid-1980s and 1990, it is **likely** to have materials containing asbestos
- After 1990, it is **unlikely** to have material containing asbestos

Asbestos can be found in many building materials, including but is not limited to the placed shown in the picture. below.



If asbestos is identified during construction, strict procedures must be followed. Work methods, equipment and safety procedures must follow with the New Zealand Guidelines for the Management and Removal of Asbestos and the Health and Safety at Work Act (Asbestos) Regulation 2016.

It is essential that an asbestos removal plan is developed by a Licensed Asbestos Removal contractor and implemented whenever any asbestos-contaminated material (ACM) over 10sqm in area is to be removed. This work requires WorkSafe NZ to be notified before the work is carried out.

A copy of the asbestos clearance certificate must be sighted by an Auckland Council Inspector following the removal of asbestos and included as part of the documentation submitted with the CCC application.

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.

Homeowners can be unaware of the existence of asbestos and the serious health risks it brings with removal. Materials containing asbestos are often brittle and break easily. If disturbed, the fibres are released into the atmosphere, remain and 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 Licensed Asbestos Removal contractor.

Laboratory tests can generally be conducted on materials on the same day. Council strongly recommends that a Licensed Asbestos Removal contractor is contacted before carrying out any demolition or construction on pre-1990s buildings.

Building consents where asbestos is found and where an asbestos removal plan is to be implemented

It is essential that an asbestos removal plan is developed by a Licensed Asbestos Removal contractor and implemented whenever any ACM "asbestos contaminated material" greater than 10sqm in area is to be removed. Asbestos may only be removed by a person holding this license; the contractor must notify WorkSafe NZ when such work is carried out (WorkSafe NZ phone 0800 030 040).

Following the removal of asbestos, a copy of the asbestos clearance certificate must be sighted by Council inspectors and also included as part of the documentation submitted with the CCC application.

Advice note to be noted on this building consent (BC ADV13)

ASBESTOS

As a general rule, if a building was constructed:

- Before mid-1980s it is very likely to have materials containing asbestos
- Between mid-1980s and 1990 it is likely to have materials containing asbestos
- After 1990 it is unlikely to have material containing asbestos

Stringent 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. Whatever the circumstances, it is essential that an asbestos removal plan is developed by an approved asbestos removal contractor and implemented whenever any ACM (asbestos-contaminated material) is to be removed. Asbestos may only be removed by a person holding this license; the contractor must notify WorkSafe NZ when such work is carried out. (WorkSafe NZ - 0800 030 040). Refer to WorkSafe NZ for responsibilities of residential house owners if planned work may involve asbestos and Asbestos Quick Guides for tradespeople.

Following the removal of asbestos identified on the relevant site/building, a copy of the asbestos clearance certificate must be Council inspectors and also included as part of the documentation submitted with the CCC application.

Further advice

- **Imports and Exports (Asbestos- containing Products) Prohibition Order 2016**
  Asbestos is currently not a banned product under the Building Act. However, it is illegal to import products containing asbestos into New Zealand unless a permit is granted by the Environmental Protection Authority. These permits would only cover specialist products, such as gaskets, seals and brake linings which may not have practical alternatives available. It is unlikely that any asbestos containing building products will be permitted to be imported.
- WorkSafe NZ – 0800 030 040
- Clarifications on WorkSafe's approved code of practice - Management and removal of asbestos | WorkSafe
- List of Licensed Asbestos Removalists - Licence holder register | WorkSafe