

What Building Contractors need to know about Loose-Fill Asbestos Insulation in Pre-1980 Homes

What is Asbestos

Asbestos is the name given to a group of naturally occurring mineral fibres that were used in a wide range of industrial and domestic products due to their strength, insulating features and resistance to fire.

How Loose-fill Asbestos Insulation differs from bonded or sheet asbestos

Loose-fill asbestos insulation is raw asbestos that has been crushed into a fine state and installed in ceiling spaces. During the 1960s and 1970s loose-fill asbestos insulation was installed in some residential and commercial premises in Australia. One company, which traded in the Australian Capital Territory as Mr Fluffy, was the main installer of loose-fill asbestos insulation.

The NSW Government is required under the *Home Building Act 1989* to maintain a register of residential properties that are confirmed to contain loose-fill asbestos insulation - the **Loose-fill Asbestos Insulation Register**.

The register is available on the NSW Fair Trading website and each property can be searched for by its street address.

Under the *Home Building Act 1989*, a property affected by loose-fill asbestos insulation must display a warning sign at its main switchboard once it has been added to the register.



Note

Builders, contractors and inspectors working on or in Pre-1980 homes should check if loose-fill asbestos insulation is present in the home prior to commencing work or quoting for work, the Loose-fill Asbestos Insulation Register will only identify those properties that registered for testing with NSW Fair Trading and tested positive.

Be Aware

It is likely that there may be unidentified homes that contain loose-fill asbestos insulation.

There are many other products that have the appearance of loose-fill asbestos insulation. In some cases, in the roof space, loose-fill asbestos insulation has also been located underneath synthetic mineral fibre insulation (batts).

Therefore, care needs to be taken to ensure the safety of people accessing the roof space in homes where loose-fill asbestos insulation might be present.

Examples of materials that might look like loose-fill asbestos insulation include:

- synthetic mineral fibre (batts)
- cellulose insulation
- rockwool



WARNING

Loose-Fill Asbestos Insulation can only be identified by testing – **IT CANNOT BE IDENTIFIED VISUALLY - IF IN DOUBT STAY OUT** and organise to get it tested.



Typical installation of loose-fill asbestos insulation in roof area

If unsure of the material installed in the ceiling space, the only way to determine if the material is loose-fill asbestos insulation is by testing. The homeowner, building contractor or inspector should engage a **competent person, such as a licensed asbestos assessor**, to assess the risks and provide expert advice before commencing any work and accessing ceilings or sub-floor areas.

A worker should not enter the sub-floor, wall cavities or roof space of a home affected by loose-fill asbestos insulation unless they are a Class A licensed asbestos removalist or a licensed asbestos assessor.

Other workers should only enter these areas under the direct supervision of a Class A licensed asbestos removalist and comply with their instructions (i.e. PPE & decontamination).

If there is a requirement to access roof spaces, wall cavities or sub-floor areas to undertake work in a home where you suspect loose-fill asbestos insulation might be present, employers should:

- ask the home owner/occupier if the property contains loose-fill asbestos insulation
- ask the home owner/occupier if testing has been undertaken and if so, review the report
- **if you suspect that the home may contain loose-fill asbestos insulation, request the home owner to have it tested prior to proceeding with any quote or works. Do not enter roof space or sub-floor areas until tested by a competent person**

- upon entering any roof spaces, wall cavities or sub-floor areas in a property that appears to contain loose-fill asbestos insulation, the worker should:
 - immediately withdraw from the area
 - notify the home owner/occupier
 - ask their manager/supervisor to contact the home owner to arrange for the material to be tested by a competent person such as a licensed asbestos assessor

If the result confirms the presence of loose-fill asbestos insulation, the homeowner can contact us to inquire about potential assistance available which will be assessed on a case-by-case basis. Contact [Service NSW](http://ServiceNSW.gov.au) on 13 77 88 or email AsbestosTaskforce@finance.nsw.gov.au

If the property has been identified as containing loose-fill asbestos insulation and you must enter to undertake emergency works, then it must only be entered under the guidance of a Class A licensed asbestos remover or a licensed asbestos assessor.

Disclaimer: This information is general and provides guidance to workers and employers on how to manage potential risks of asbestos exposure to loose-fill insulation in affected homes.

It does not purport to be a comprehensive safety guide or apply individually to a particular affected home. It does not apply to asbestos removal or demolition of these homes. It is not legal advice and should not be relied or acted upon as if it were.

Employers and any other persons reading this document must comply with the applicable legislation.

Useful Links to NSW Fair Trading Website

fairtrading.nsw.gov.au/mandatory-tagging

fairtrading.nsw.gov.au/working-in-an-affected-home

fairtrading.nsw.gov.au/health-and-safety

fairtrading.nsw.gov.au/public-register-of-affected-properties

www.fairtrading.nsw.gov.au
Fair Trading enquiries 13 32 20
TTY 1300 723 404
Language assistance 13 14 50

This fact sheet must not be relied on as legal advice. For more information about this topic, refer to the appropriate legislation.

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