

Arranging a residential asbestos assessment

Fact Sheet

THINK TWICE
ABOUT ASBESTOS

Homes built before 1990 can contain asbestos, but unfortunately most people can't tell if a material contains asbestos just by looking at it. An asbestos professional can conduct a survey to identify whether asbestos-containing materials (ACMs) are present, their location and condition, and provide you with guidance on how to manage the risks.



Asbestos materials become dangerous to health if they are damaged, disturbed or deteriorating. An asbestos survey (also known as an asbestos audit or inspection) provides the information you need to prevent exposure to

asbestos fibres and reduce unexpected costs when undertaking repairs or renovations. An asbestos survey should always be carried out before starting any renovation work. This fact sheet can help you understand what it is that you're paying for when getting an asbestos survey for a residential property and some questions to ask the surveyor.

Who undertakes asbestos surveys?

Conducting an asbestos survey is a specialised task that requires training and experience. Some occupational hygienists, asbestos assessors, hazardous materials consultants, environmental health professionals and building surveyors may be competent to conduct asbestos surveys if they have the additional training and experience in identifying and sampling ACMs.

In the Australian Capital Territory (ACT), a person must be licensed to carry out an asbestos survey of a residential property.¹

When engaging an asbestos surveyor, obtain information on:

- their training, qualifications and experience
- references, reviews or evidence of recent similar work, and
- insurance (professional indemnity and public liability cover for asbestos work).

1. A register of ACT licensed asbestos assessors is available on the [WorkSafeACT](https://www.worksafeact.gov.au) website.

What is involved in an asbestos survey?

An asbestos survey usually begins with the surveyor gathering background information, for example, information about the age of the property and details about its construction. The surveyor then conducts a visual inspection of the property, including internal and external areas that are accessible.

Samples of suspect ACMs may be taken for laboratory analysis. If intrusive sampling is required, the surveyor should discuss this with you before carrying it out.

Laboratory testing is the only way to confirm the presence of asbestos. In Australia, a laboratory must be accredited by the National Association of Testing Authorities (NATA) to carry out testing for asbestos. You can find out if a laboratory is accredited to carry out asbestos analysis on the [NATA website](https://www.nata.gov.au).

If any area of the property is not accessible but it is reasonable to believe it could contain asbestos, the surveyor should assume the presence of asbestos in that area.

At the completion of the survey, the surveyor will provide you with a report that should include:

- the date of the survey
- the address of the property
- a site plan showing all the areas inspected and the locations of the identified or assumed asbestos
- photographs of the identified or assumed asbestos, showing its location and condition
- the results of any laboratory analysis of samples taken from the property
- information about the likelihood of the material releasing asbestos fibres, with recommended actions for the management or removal of the asbestos.

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Isn't this information provided in a pre-purchase building inspection?

A pre-purchase building inspection is not required to include whether asbestos is present in the property.² However, a building inspector with the necessary experience and skills to carry out an asbestos survey may be able to do so.

How much will an asbestos survey cost?

Like most trade services, the cost of an asbestos survey can vary depending on the expertise of the provider, the size of the property to be assessed, as well as the amount of sampling and testing required. For example, if at least five samples are taken the average cost may be around \$1000 for the report after samples have been analysed. Cheaper is not always better, and by obtaining more than one quote you can compare the services offered and the experience of the surveyor before going ahead with the work.

If the home is a rental property, landlords may be able to claim immediate tax deductions for the cost of an asbestos survey.



What if I can't afford an asbestos survey or cannot get one done?

If you are unable to engage an asbestos surveyor, there are some NATA laboratories that will test samples that you have carefully taken yourself. If you choose this option, you must carry sampling out in a safe way to ensure you do not expose yourself or others to asbestos fibres. The laboratory who will test your samples can advise you of safe procedures for handling asbestos samples.



What should I do with the information from the survey?

The asbestos survey results will help you to:

- avoid disturbing ACMs during home improvements, maintenance or repair
- alert tradespersons working at your home about the presence and location of asbestos
- ensure that your home insurance policies are sufficient to cover asbestos liabilities
- remove ACMs before commencing any renovations
- remove ACMs that might become damaged in disaster events, particularly if your property is located in disaster prone areas
- disclose the presence of asbestos at point of sale or lease.

Further information

Detailed information on how surveys and sampling are carried out is available in **National Guide for Asbestos Surveys**.

Information on taking precautions around asbestos is available in **Asbestos safety information for householders and home renovators**.

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2. The Australian Standard AS 4349.1-2007, *Inspection of buildings, Part 1: Pre-purchase inspections—Residential buildings* states that an inspector need not inspect or report on health hazards, e.g. presence of asbestos.

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