

# Arranging a residential asbestos assessment

## Fact Sheet

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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 an assessment to identify whether asbestos-containing materials 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 assessment (also known as an asbestos survey, asbestos audit or asbestos inspection) can provide the information you need

to prevent exposure to asbestos fibres and reduce unexpected future costs when undertaking repairs or renovations. An asbestos assessment 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 assessment for a residential property and some questions to ask the assessor.

### Who undertakes asbestos assessments?

Not all building professionals will have, or need to have, experience in identifying asbestos-containing materials, so it's a good idea to ask an assessor about their experience and qualifications before hiring them.

Asbestos professionals who can assist with identifying asbestos include:

- licensed asbestos assessors and removalists
- occupational hygienists who have experience with asbestos
- persons who have undertaken a recognised training course<sup>1</sup> in asbestos identification.

In the Australian Capital Territory (ACT), a person must be licensed to carry out an asbestos assessment of a residential property.<sup>2</sup> In all other Australian states and

territories, a person does not need to be licensed to carry out an asbestos inspection or assessment of a residential property to identify asbestos-containing materials (these requirements differ if the assessment is for ensuring a space is safe after asbestos removal).

You can find asbestos assessors by searching online for asbestos professionals in your area.

### What is involved in an asbestos assessment?

An asbestos assessment usually begins with the assessor **gathering background information**, for example, information about the age of the property and details about its construction.

The assessor then conducts a **physical audit** or **visual inspection** of the property, including internal and external areas that are accessible.

**Samples of suspect asbestos-containing materials** may be taken for laboratory analysis. If intrusive sampling is required, the assessor 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**.

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

Learn more at  
[asbestosafety.gov.au](http://asbestosafety.gov.au)



Australian Government  
Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency

## What should an assessment report include?

At the completion of the assessment, the assessor will provide you with a report that should include:

- the date of the assessment
- the address of the property
- the details of any identified or assumed asbestos-containing materials, including location, type of asbestos and its condition
- the results of any laboratory analysis of samples taken from the property.

An assessment report may also include photographs of identified or assumed asbestos-containing materials in the property, and advice on its management or removal.



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

## 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.<sup>3</sup> However, a building inspector with the necessary experience and skills to carry out an asbestos assessment may be able to do so.

## How much will an asbestos assessment cost?

Like most trade services, the cost of an asbestos assessment 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 cost may be around \$950 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 assessor before going ahead with the work.



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

Any material that may contain asbestos should be treated as if it does until an assessment can be carried out to confirm whether it contains asbestos or not.

If you are unable to engage an asbestos assessor, 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. You can find details of laboratories that are accredited to carry out asbestos analysis on the [NATA website](#).

Further information is available in [Asbestos safety information for householders and home renovators](#) and [Asbestos in the home](#).

1. Accredited courses or training delivered by Registered Training Organisations

2. A public register of ACT licensed asbestos assessors is available on the [WorkSafeACT](#) website.

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