

# REMOVING ASBESTOS-CONTAINING FLOORING



## INTRODUCTION

Floor tiles and linoleum, or lino, may contain asbestos. They may also have asbestos paper backing, or be fixed with asbestos-containing mastic.

This sheet describes good practices to follow if you need to lift a small amount of flooring that contains asbestos.

If you need:

- > to remove more than 10 m<sup>2</sup> of flooring containing non-friable asbestos, this work will need to be done by a licensed asbestos removalist from 4 April 2016. A licensed removalist could be a current Certificate of Competence holder up until April 2018.
- > to drill through flooring containing asbestos, see the sheet *Drilling holes in asbestos-containing board*.

## PREPARING THE WORK AREA

- > Make sure there is safe access to the work area.
- > Restrict access – reduce the number of people present.
- > Close doors opening into the work area. Use tape and notices to inform others why the area is restricted.

- > If it's possible, also restrict access to the area behind the asbestos-containing board.
- > Let other people know the area is contaminated.

## KEEP DUST DOWN

- > Use plastic sheets to cover your work area to help stop the spread of dust. They will also make cleaning up easier.

## USE THE RIGHT PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

### WEAR A MASK

- > Not all masks protect from asbestos.
- > A disposable P2 mask with a valve is the minimum needed for this work. P1 or 'nuisance dust' masks will not provide the protection you need.
- > Don't re-use disposable masks.
- > Make sure your mask fits properly. Facial hair and stubble make it almost impossible to get a good seal between your face and the mask.

### WEAR OVERALLS

- > Disposable overalls will stop the tiny asbestos fibres getting on your clothes.
- > Don't re-use disposable overalls.
- > Wear the overalls one size too big as it will help prevent ripping at the seams.
- > Make sure you put the legs of the overalls over the top of your footwear – don't tuck them in as it lets in dust.





**Figure 1:** Floor tiles that contain asbestos can also have asbestos paper backing, or be fixed with asbestos-containing mastic

## PROCEDURE

**Caution:** Don't sand the floor under asbestos-containing flooring.

- > Put on the mask and overalls and make sure they fit properly.
- > Protect nearby surfaces from contamination.
- > Place a scraper in the joint between the tiles.
- > Lift the flooring gently - try to avoid breakage.
- > For firmly-fixed flooring, tap the scraper with a hammer.
- > For larger areas, lift the flooring using a shovel. This speeds up the job and avoids kneeling close to the flooring.
- > Spray water under the flooring as you lift it up, to suppress dust.
- > Wet any asbestos paper backing as you lift the flooring.
- > Gently scrape up mastic. You can soften mastic with solvent.
- > Place debris in the waste container.

## CLEAN UP PROPERLY

It's really important to clean up properly so that you safely remove and dispose of the asbestos waste.

### THE WORK AREA AND TOOLS

- > Clean up as you go to stop waste building up.
- > Use a damp cloth to wipe down tools and surfaces to remove asbestos fibres. Do not re-use the cloth. It must be disposed of as asbestos waste.
- > Don't sweep up because this will spread asbestos fibres into the air.
- > Don't use domestic vacuum cleaners to clean up asbestos dust. Use a vacuum with a type of filter designed to capture fine particles like asbestos.

### PERSONAL CLEAN-UP

- > Dispose of disposable masks and overalls safely after you have finished the job. The mask and overalls are asbestos waste.
- > Don't take overalls home or wear them in vehicles. This will prevent people at home being exposed to asbestos fibres.

### DISPOSAL

- > Make sure all waste, including masks, overalls, cloths and plastic sheets are double-bagged in heavy-duty plastic bags, sealed with tape and marked as asbestos waste.
- > Dispose of the asbestos waste at an authorised disposal site. Contact the local tips in your area to find one that accepts asbestos waste.

### FINISHING THE JOB

Visually inspect the area to make sure it has been cleaned properly.

From 4 April 2016 regulations on asbestos work will change. This includes the introduction of a new asbestos removal licensing system. Find out more at [www.business.govt.nz/worksafe/asbestos](http://www.business.govt.nz/worksafe/asbestos)