

# Testing for loose-fill asbestos

Search for a licensed asbestos assessor in your region on the **Asbestos demolition licence holders page** at [www.safework.nsw.gov.au](http://www.safework.nsw.gov.au)

## Home testing

### How do I find out if there is loose-fill asbestos in my home?

Loose-fill asbestos cannot be confirmed by a visual inspection as there are other types of insulation that look like loose-fill asbestos insulation.

For this reason, a sample of the material needs to be taken by a licensed asbestos assessor and tested by a National Association of Testing Authorities (NATA) accredited laboratory to confirm the presence of loose-fill asbestos.

### What if my property is under a strata scheme?

As any loose-fill asbestos insulation is likely to be located within common property, owners of properties that belong to a strata scheme cannot participate individually in the Voluntary Purchase and Demolition Program.

It is the responsibility of the owners corporation to arrange for a licensed asbestos assessor to test the property for loose-fill asbestos.

Prior to registration, the owners corporation must pass a special resolution at a general meeting to register the entire scheme, but only if the intention to register was submitted by 1 August 2016 using the online strata scheme registration form.

Download the owners corporation resolution template from the Fair Trading website

Before exercising their votes at the general meeting, lot owners should be aware of the implications of the strata scheme being found to contain loose-fill asbestos insulation.

Visit the New Laws page on the NSW Fair Trading website for more information. Lot owners should also be made aware of the assistance available to them under the Government's Voluntary Purchase and Demolition Program.

NSW Fair Trading will require a copy of the resolution that was passed at the meeting as evidence of the decision to register.

If loose-fill asbestos insulation is found in the strata scheme, individual lot owners will be contacted to arrange for the next phases of the Program. You can read more on the Valuation and acquisition processes page on the NSW Fair Trading website.

### What is a licensed asbestos assessor and what will they do?

A licensed asbestos assessor is qualified to remove and test loose-fill asbestos. When the licensed asbestos assessor arrives at a home to take a sample test, they will do the following:

- Show the homeowner their identification in the form of a Licensed Asbestos Assessor Card.
- Find out if any renovations or extensions have been completed at the property to determine whether more than one sample needs to be taken.
- Prepare the site for safe access.
- Establish a decontamination point which is a separate area for the licensed asbestos assessor to decontaminate themselves, their tools and equipment when they are leaving the asbestos removal work area.
- Ask the homeowner to move items within the vicinity of the sample being taken.
- Direct the homeowner and any person in the home to stay in another room or outside until the sample has been taken.
- Wear personal protective equipment.

## How does a licensed asbestos assessor take the sample?

The licensed asbestos assessor will conduct a visual inspection of the living spaces in the property and will take a representative sample of ceiling insulation to determine if there is loose-fill asbestos in the home.

The licensed asbestos assessor will also ensure that there is no one within the vicinity of where the sample is being taken.

The sample will be appropriately bagged and identified. Finally, the licensed asbestos assessor will decontaminate themselves, their tools and equipment before leaving the decontamination point.

## How is the ceiling sample tested?

Samples are sent to a laboratory accredited by the National Association of Testing Authorities (NATA). The laboratory will test the samples for the presence of loose-fill asbestos, in compliance with relevant Australian testing standards.

## How long will it take to find out the results of my sample test?

Every endeavour is made to provide results within a reasonable timeframe, however results may be delayed due to unforeseen circumstances or busy periods for licensed asbestos assessors and/or accredited testing laboratories.

## How do I find out the results of my sample test?

If your property falls within an identified local government area and the test does not detect any loose-fill asbestos, the report will be sent directly to you (the homeowner) and NSW Fair Trading.

If the sample tests confirms the presence of loose-fill asbestos, a copy of the report will be forwarded to NSW Fair Trading, who will then contact you directly. Your local council and emergency services agencies will also be advised of the result.

Homeowners who privately engage a licensed asbestos assessor to undertake a sample test will have their results provided directly to them.

## What happens if the sample test confirms the presence of loose-fill asbestos in my home?

If the initial sample test confirms the presence of loose-fill asbestos, the next step is to conduct an air and dust assessment. This assessment identifies exposure pathways and will assess the health risks associated with living in the property.

The air and dust assessment, arranged by Fair Trading, will be carried out by a licensed asbestos assessor who will conduct the following:

- a visual investigation of the living spaces of the property to determine possible exposure pathways that are visually identifiable
- dust and swab sampling in areas which are identified during the investigation as possible exposure pathways
- airborne asbestos fibre monitoring to determine the levels of loose-fill asbestos within your home.

If your home is found to contain loose-fill asbestos insulation, you are then eligible to have your property purchased under the NSW Government's Voluntary Purchase and Demolition Program.

When a property is confirmed to contain loose-fill asbestos insulation, the property address will be placed on the Public Register of affected properties.

The affected premises will also be 'tagged', which means a government-approved label is required to be placed at the electrical meter box. The purpose of these two requirements is to ensure the health and safety of tradespeople, maintenance workers, service providers and emergency services that may have to access the roof cavity.

The property details will be removed from the Public Register when the affected property has been demolished and the land remediated. Once this has

occurred, the property is no longer required to be 'tagged'.

## Air and dust assessment

### How is airborne asbestos fibre monitoring completed?

Fair Trading will arrange with you for a licensed asbestos assessor to attend your property to undertake asbestos air fibre monitoring, which tests the air quality readings of ambient air fibre levels within the property.

This test is performed by monitoring the air quality in key living areas of the property for 24 hours per day over a seven day period. Air borne sampling generally focuses on areas in the home regularly used by residents, areas of suspected contamination and areas of concern expressed by the resident.

All samples are then analysed by a National Association of Testing Authorities accredited laboratory to determine the levels and concentration of loose-fill asbestos within the tested areas of the property.

Once testing has been carried out, the licensed asbestos assessor will provide a copy of the report to NSW Fair Trading, who will then provide the homeowner with a copy of the report.

### Do I need to vacate my property during airborne asbestos fibre monitoring testing?

No, residents can remain in their premises throughout this testing process. Residents are encouraged to undertake daily activities as usual and complete a diary of daily cleaning activities.

### Is there a safe level of airborne asbestos?

As per recommendations from Safe Work Australia, a property is suitable to be occupied if air sampling is between 0.01 fibres/millilitre f/ml and 0.1 fibres/millilitre f/ml.

Homeowners will be contacted to discuss the results of the air and dust assessment.

### Do I have to pay for the air and dust assessment?

Homeowners who had registered for free sample testing prior to 1 August will not be required to pay for the air and dust assessment that will be required if the initial sample test confirms the presence of loose-fill asbestos. NSW Fair Trading will cover the cost of this assessment.

### Do I have to go ahead with the air and dust assessment?

No, the homeowner can choose to exit the Program at any time. However, homeowners should be aware that until an affected premises is demolished and remediated, the premises will be listed on a public register that identifies the property as being affected by loose-fill asbestos.

The property will also be tagged with a warning sign that it is affected by loose-fill asbestos to ensure tradespeople and emergency services are aware of the presence of loose-fill asbestos.

## Other

### How do I know if my home was tested properly?

Licensed asbestos assessors have specialised expertise and must be licensed before they can undertake testing for loose-fill asbestos in homes. The nature of testing may differ from home to home, depending on the individual circumstances surrounding the space.

Should a homeowner have any concerns regarding testing, they can contact NSW Fair Trading by email [asbestosenquiry@finance.nsw.gov.au](mailto:asbestosenquiry@finance.nsw.gov.au) or by calling Service NSW on 13 77 88.

### Am I able to collect a sample for testing by myself?

NSW Fair Trading does not recommend any untrained professional enters the roof cavity to take a sample of material that could potentially contain loose-fill asbestos.

If you do arrange for private testing and loose-fill asbestos insulation is detected, NSW Fair Trading may arrange for your property to be re-tested to ensure the sample test meets testing protocols.

**If you have concerns that your property may contain loose-fill asbestos, it is strongly recommended that you do not enter the roof cavity or collect any samples.**

If you do have concerns, you should contact NSW Fair Trading or engage the services of a licensed asbestos assessor.

### **What if I think I have loose-fill asbestos in my property?**

Fair Trading can assist you in engaging a licensed asbestos assessor to conduct a sample test at your expense. If the test detects the presence of loose-fill asbestos, please contact NSW Fair Trading to enquire about potential assistance available which will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

To contact Fair Trading, send an email to [AsbestosEnquiry@finance.nsw.gov.au](mailto:AsbestosEnquiry@finance.nsw.gov.au)

SafeWork NSW provides a search page for asbestos and demolition licence holders, including licensed asbestos assessors. Enter your search requirements by selecting "licensed asbestos assessor" and the relevant region in NSW.