



ACT
Government

**Asbestos Response
Taskforce**

Loose Fill Asbestos ('Mr Fluffy') Insulation: Guidance for Furniture Removalists

The information contained in this document is general and intended to provide guidance to furniture removalists (and their employers) to manage potential risks in relation to affected houses. It does not purport to be comprehensive or apply individually to a particular affected house. This document is not legal advice and should not be relied or acted upon as if it were. Furniture removalists and any other persons reading this document should obtain their own legal advice about legal and other obligations.

What are the health effects of asbestos exposure?

Asbestos is a risk to health when it is breathed in. The risk to health increases in proportion to the number of asbestos fibres a person breathes in during their lifetime. There are a number of diseases that can be related to inhaled asbestos fibres, including mesothelioma. This disease can take a long time to develop after initial exposure to asbestos (at least 20 to 30 years after the first exposure). Most people who develop asbestos related disease have had significant exposure to either a large amount of fibres or frequent exposure.

What is the risk of being exposed to asbestos in houses affected by loose fill asbestos insulation?

Despite the loose fill asbestos removal program (that operated from 1988-93) loose asbestos fibres remain in the roof spaces, wall cavities and subfloors of affected houses. In some houses, fibres have been detected in cupboards, heating and cooling ducts and vents, and living areas.

These remaining fibres pose a low risk to health particularly if the property is maintained in good condition, the fibres are undisturbed and you do not have direct contact with them through inhalation.

How do I minimise risks while working in affected houses?

Despite the low level of risk in affected houses, the risk cannot be ignored. During furniture removal and packing there is a potential for you to disturb dust containing fibres, so removal of household goods from affected homes should be regarded as work involving a low level of contamination. This means that you and your employer are obliged to eliminate or minimise risks to your health and safety at work.

Furniture removalists may pack and move household goods from these homes. However, removalists must not enter known contaminated areas and must take care when working in any dusty area. This means that no goods should be packed or moved from sub-floor or roof cavities in any of these homes. The asbestos assessment report should be consulted for information on other areas that were found to be contaminated.

To minimise risk, the following approach is recommended in these homes:

- **Make sure you have attended the mandatory Asbestos Awareness training course.** The Australian Furniture Removers Association has made arrangements with a training provider to

undertake the mandatory Asbestos Awareness Training in the ACT. Details are available from AFRA on 1800 671 806.

- **Check to see if this is a loose fill (Mr Fluffy) home. There are a number of ways to do this before you quote on a job:**
 1. Ask the homeowner and ask for a copy of any asbestos assessor report
 2. Check the meterbox –there should be a sticker in it (but this is only mandatory from 1 Jan 2015)
 3. Request a free building file search–while this is not instant, it is a free service provided by ACTPLA: http://www.planning.act.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0011/38783/Asbestos-file-search.pdf
- **Ensure that you read any asbestos assessment for the property.** This report will indicate where fibres have been detected so you can make a judgment about what areas of the house to avoid or in which to take particular care, such as using personal protective equipment (PPE).
- **You may enter the property without respiratory protection to merely undertake a quote** but do not access contaminated cupboards or sub floor areas.
- Generally, if there is an asbestos assessment report for the property, this will be provided by the homeowner. If there is no report, you should:
 - request the homeowner to obtain an asbestos assessment report prior to conducting the furniture removal (this can be arranged by the Taskforce with the owners' consent), or
 - assume the home is contaminated and use appropriate PPE as a precaution.
- **Never enter the subfloor or ceiling cavity of an affected home, as these areas are likely to be highly contaminated.** Sealed, occupied downstairs or basement rooms (with no open access to the subfloor) may be accessed however you should exercise appropriate caution, minimising airborne dust, wearing PPE and minimising time spent in these areas. You should also avoid disturbing any exposed ceiling, wall or floor cavities.
- **Wear P2 half-face respiratory protection at all times during packing and furniture removal, and especially in dusty areas.**
- **Provide the homeowner with plastic covers for soft furniture and appropriate packing cartons for soft furnishings to pack themselves.** The homeowner should either leave these items in the contaminated cupboards for later disposal by the Territory or pack them themselves. Vacuum cleaners and brooms should also be packed by the homeowner.
- **Do not pack soft items such as linen, clothing or toys if they have been stored in a cupboard identified by a licensed asbestos assessor as contaminated.** The homeowner should dispose of these goods in waste.
- **Avoid creating lots of dust.** You should cost into your work time to wet wipe any dusty items. You may also refuse to pack very dusty goods from storage areas if you are concerned. Do not go into areas if you have any concerns about your safety (because of the possible presence of asbestos or for any other reason). Don't pack dusty goods as these may create concern at the delivery end.

- **Do not go into houses that are part way through renovations** and wall, ceiling or floor cavities are exposed. The Taskforce will arrange alternate approaches to houses known to be part way through renovations. Please contact the Taskforce or WorkSafe ACT if you arrive at a house in this category.
- Follow advice provided to you at asbestos awareness training and by your employer.
- Complete your work and leave the house promptly.

What PPE should I use?

The use of personal protective equipment is recommended for furniture removal because this is often dusty work, even though the main living areas have a very low level of fibre contamination. A P2 half face respirator should be worn as a precaution. Make sure the respirator fits well. If you have a beard, you will need to use a full face respirator to ensure it fits properly. Employers are advised to obtain the assistance of a licensed asbestos assessor to make sure workers have correctly fitted respiratory protection.

You should also comply with your employer's internal work health and safety policies and ensure you discuss any concerns with your employer. The best safety outcomes are a result of consultation and collaboration between employers and workers.

What if I am unsure?

Only licensed asbestos assessors are qualified to provide advice on risks and precautions required in individual houses. If you require further advice please contact a licensed asbestos assessor.

Further information

Further information is available on the Asbestos Response Taskforce website:

<http://www.act.gov.au/asbestos-response-taskforce>