



ACT
Government

**Asbestos Response
Taskforce**

Guidance in relation to contents in homes affected by loose fill asbestos insulation

The information contained in this document is general and intended to provide guidance to homeowners to assist them in making informed choices about their possessions. It does not purport to be comprehensive or apply individually to a particular affected home. This guidance has been developed in consultation with the Chief Health Officer, the Work Safety Commissioner and licensed asbestos assessors and has been reviewed by Dr Ian Gardner, Senior Physician in Occupational and Environmental Medicine, Department of Defence.

You should read the whole document carefully in conjunction with the report of the asbestos assessment conducted on your home. If you have any questions about what to do with your possessions, you should seek the advice of a licensed asbestos assessor.

Overview

There is no practical way to certify that household contents in affected homes are not contaminated by asbestos fibres.

Nevertheless, it is likely most household contents can be removed from most affected homes provided they are not taken from known contaminated areas. The Taskforce and WorkSafe ACT encourage a measured response to decision making by homeowners about their possessions, as well as by businesses and the wider community.

Destruction of all contents in every affected home is unnecessary, distressing, costly and wasteful.

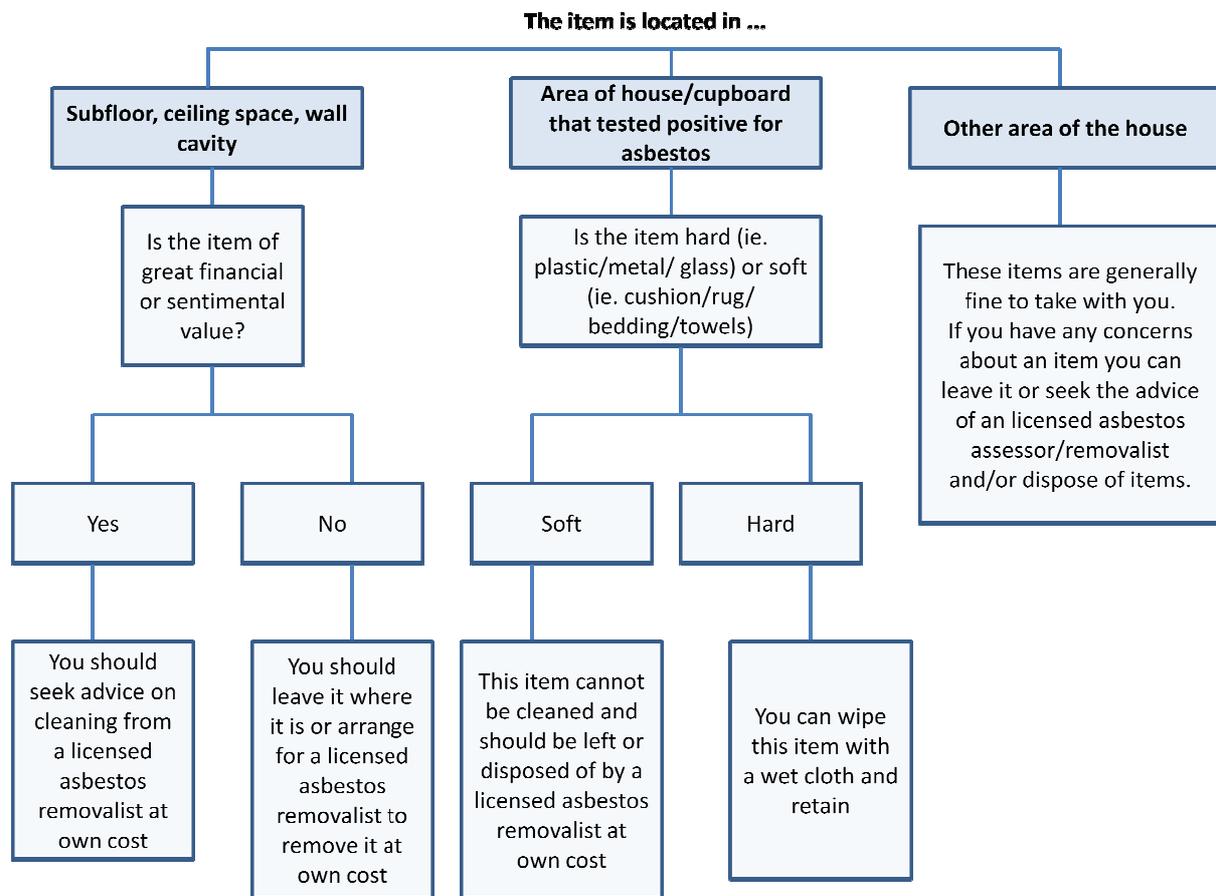
Even where asbestos fibres have been detected in settled dust within living or storage areas of a home, expert advice to the Taskforce is that the health risk from possible exposure associated with moving goods from other areas of a home is low, but cannot be discounted.

Expert advice provided to the Taskforce is that the risk to the community associated with potential contamination of contents in affected homes is similarly low.

Goods stored in subfloor and ceiling areas, and in cupboards where fibres have been detected, should not be moved or recovered unless they have been decontaminated by a licensed asbestos removalist.

A similar approach should be adopted in relation to all contents of homes where residents have been advised to vacate their homes, especially where fibres have been detected in air conditioning and heating ducts.

A suggested decision making approach is set out in the following figure:



What do I do with contents stored in known contaminated areas?

Known contaminated areas are:

- wall cavities, roof spaces and subfloor areas
- locations where a licensed asbestos assessor has located asbestos fibres (e.g. cupboards)

You should not try to remove, sell, or give away goods that have been stored in a contaminated subfloor, roof space or cupboard. These goods should be disposed of by a licensed asbestos removalist, or left in your vacated house for safe disposal by the Taskforce as part of the demolition process.

If you want to recover goods of great financial or sentimental value from these locations, you should engage a licensed asbestos removalist and seek their advice on building approval requirements. This will be at your cost and it is important to note it is impossible to certify goods are not contaminated.

If a licensed asbestos assessor has made recommendations that certain goods be disposed of, you should follow that advice. Any fabric items that have been stored in a known contaminated area (e.g. soft furnishings, soft toys, bedding, linen and clothing) cannot be effectively decontaminated.

Any items in living areas with hard cleanable surfaces (e.g. crockery, portable electrical items, furniture) are unlikely to be significantly contaminated and you can wipe any visible dust off these

items yourself with a wet cloth as a precaution. Advice received by the Taskforce is that you are generally at low risk of exposure to asbestos fibres in this activity. However, if you are concerned, you can choose to engage a licensed asbestos removalist.

What can I clean and take?

Household contents from living areas of your home that are not known contaminated areas can be wiped down with wet cloths before removal as a precaution.

What can I remove without cleaning?

The following sorts of goods are most unlikely to be contaminated:

- goods in rooms or areas that have been cleaned by a licensed asbestos removalist
- garden and outdoor furnishings and contents of unaffected exterior sheds.

Financial Assistance

The Taskforce will not reimburse the costs of decontamination of goods stored in known contaminated areas by licensed asbestos removalists.

The ACT Government has waived tip fees for affected homeowners disposing potentially contaminated goods. Licensed asbestos removalists should not charge for disposal of contents.

While insurance policies often exclude asbestos contamination, they differ. Homeowners, tenants and landlords are encouraged to discuss claims in relation to contents with their insurers. Floor coverings and curtains will be included as part of the valuation process under the Buyback Program.