

# Auckland Regional Public Health Service

Rātonga Hauora ā Iwi o Tamaki Makaurau



Working with the people of Auckland, Counties Manukau and Waitemata

## SUSPECTED ASBESTOS-CONTAINING MATERIALS

For information about the health risks of asbestos and how to identify suspected asbestos-containing materials in your home, please read the booklet *All About Asbestos*.

### 1. SUSPECTED ASBESTOS CONTAINING MATERIAL IN SOUND CONDITION

Asbestos-containing material is not a risk to your health, providing it is in sound condition and is not disturbed. We therefore recommend that you leave undisturbed any suspected asbestos-containing material that is in sound condition.

If you own the property and wish to remove any suspected asbestos-containing material, we recommend that you first have the material tested for the presence of asbestos. Precautions to take when collecting a sample are given overleaf. Some quality-assured laboratories that test for asbestos include:

- Dowdell and Associates in Auckland - ph 09 526 0246
- Capital Environmental Services in Wellington - ph 04 566 3311

Alternatively, you can assume that the material does contain asbestos and take the precautions described in this leaflet and in the booklet *Removing Asbestos from the Home*.

### 2. SUSPECTED ASBESTOS CONTAINING MATERIAL IN POOR CONDITION

Auckland Regional Public Health Service has a small budget to test material for asbestos that meets any of the following criteria in an occupied residential dwelling:

- the material is friable (**easily crumbled**), *or*
- the material is **loose, dusty, fluffy or flaking**, *or*
- the material is showing signs of **mildew or mould damage**, *or*
- **significant** cracks are appearing in the material, *or*
- the material is **not securely fastened**

Please follow the instructions overleaf for sampling of suspected asbestos containing materials. If you are a tenant you should first consult your landlord if sampling is likely to damage any property that is not your own. If we have agreed to test a sample, we will provide a special bag.

If you have more than one potential asbestos hazard, for example two rooms with textured ceilings installed at different times with possibly different materials; then please discuss this with a Health Protection Officer before proceeding. Duty Health Protection Officer (Environmental Health), Auckland Regional Public Health Service, ph (09) 623 4600.

Any enquiries about asbestos in the workplace should be directed to the Occupational Safety and Health Service of the Department of Labour (listed under "Labour, Department of" in the phone book blue pages.)

## **DO NOT MIX SAMPLES OF DIFFERENT MATERIALS**

### 3. HOW TO TAKE A SAMPLE FOR ASBESTOS TESTING

1. Cover your mouth and nose with a **dust mask** e.g. from a hardware retailer.
2. Reduce **dust** by soaking the suspected asbestos-containing material with **water**.
3. Use a tool (such as a knife or spatula) to collect the sample into a good-quality plastic bag. Use a **separate bag** to obtain a representative sample of each material to be tested.
  - For each **ceiling** cladding to be tested, take a heaped teaspoonful from two different areas of the same ceiling, giving a **tablespoonful in total**.
  - For each **floor** covering to be tested, a full thickness, 25mm square (1 square inch), piece of the material is needed (including the adhesive layer).
  - **Be careful to keep samples from different materials completely separate at all times to prevent cross contamination.**
4. **Seal** the plastic bag with sticky tape.
5. Send the sealed plastic bag (**securely packaged and with name, property address and phone number**) for testing. If we have agreed to test the sample(s) for you, please send to:

Sampling Officer (Environmental Health)  
Auckland Regional Public Health Service  
Private Bag 92605  
Symonds St  
AUCKLAND 1150

**NB We will notify results of our testing in approximately two weeks.**

Sample carefully, or the test result will be invalid. Please contact the duty Health Protection Officer (Environmental Health) for interpretation of results or advice.

### 4. WHAT IF THE RESULT OF THE ASBESTOS TEST IS POSITIVE?

If the test shows that the material does contain asbestos, we will send you standard information about your options and are available by phone for further advice. Should asbestos-containing material be in poor condition, we will recommend its removal or encapsulation (i.e. sealing).

### 5. WHAT PRECAUTIONS DO I TAKE IF I WANT TO REMOVE ASBESTOS-CONTAINING MATERIAL?

We recommend that asbestos-containing material is removed or encapsulated by professionals (some are listed under "Asbestos" in the yellow pages). The Occupational Safety and Health Service of the Department of Labour (O.S.H.) administers the Health and Safety in Employment (Asbestos) Regulations 1998. Under these Regulations, employers and employees must take precautions to protect health. "Restricted work" must be performed or directly supervised by someone with a current Certificate of Competence from O.S.H., and must be notified to O.S.H. prior to commencement. We recommend that you contact O.S.H. before a contractor begins work - to ensure that the relevant procedures have been followed and appropriate precautions will be taken.

If you wish to remove or encapsulate the asbestos-containing material yourself, please refer to the booklet *Removing Asbestos from the Home* and contact us if you have any further questions.

### 6. FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Duty Health Protection Officer (Environmental Health), Auckland Regional Public Health Service, ph (09) 623 4600
- Occupational Safety and Health (*workplace issues* - under "Labour, Department of" in the phone book blue pages)
- Your local authority (Council) (*asbestos waste disposal facilities in your area; Health Act and Building Act investigation and enforcement issues*)
- Tenancy Services (*landlord/tenant issues* – listed under "Building and Housing, Department of" in the phone book blue pages)