

INFORMATION FOR TRADESPEOPLE

Managing asbestos after Cyclone Gabrielle

WorkSafe New Zealand is aware of some businesses making incorrect assumptions about the presence or absence of asbestos containing materials in buildings damaged as a result of the Auckland flooding and Cyclone Gabrielle.

All persons conducting a business or undertaking (PCBUs), have responsibilities under the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 (HSWA) to help keep kaimahi/workers and others safe, including homeowners and residents.

Asbestos was widely used as construction and insulation material in buildings until the mid-1980s. However, as it was still used until stockpiles of the product ran out asbestos should be assumed to be used in buildings constructed before 2000. Asbestos products are not always obvious and are often hidden within the building structure.

WorkSafe have four guides designed specifically to help plumbers, builders, electricians and painters quickly understand their responsibilities and manage the risks when working with or near asbestos, but general guidance for tradespeople is also available on the WorkSafe website.

A PCBU has a primary duty of care to ensure the health and safety of its own workers, as well as other people who may be put at risk from work carried out as part of the business. The PCBU with management or control of a workplace has the following duties in relation to identifying asbestos:

- duty to ensure that exposure to airborne asbestos is eliminated or minimised (R 9)
- duty to ensure that asbestos is identified at a workplace (R 10)
- duty to analyse samples (R 11)

- duty to ensure presence and location of asbestos indicated (R 12)
- duty to prepare and review asbestos management plan (R 13-14).

The duty to ensure that asbestos is identified at a workplace does not apply if the PCBU has reasonable grounds to believe that asbestos is not present.

This may include:

- recorded evidence, such as an asbestos management plan, confirming all asbestos was removed from the workplace
- a previous survey by a person suitably qualified and experienced in asbestos identification did not find any asbestos in each individual building (assuming that because other buildings of a similar age/style do not contain asbestos is not suitable).

Actual evidence is required for a PCBU to have reasonable grounds to believe that asbestos is not present. If asbestos needs to be removed or assessed, find a current licenced asbestos removalist or assessor using the [Asbestos Licence Holder Register](#)

Full information and guidance for tradespeople on [managing asbestos](#) can be found on the WorkSafe website.

WorkSafe has also developed [cyclone-specific](#) information and guidance.