

CALGARY MOLD REMEDIATION

Asbestos Removal

How asbestos drywall compound, ceilings, floor tile, pipe insulation and siding are removed under Alberta's low, moderate and high-risk practices, and what a proper job looks like

4 Expert Answers from Remediation IQ

calgarymoldremediation.com/construction-brain

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Restricted area on an Alberta asbestos job, what does that mean?

What a Restricted Area Means on an Alberta Asbestos Job

Under the Alberta OHS Code, a restricted area is the part of a work site where there is a reasonable chance that airborne asbestos may exceed the occupational exposure limit. Where that applies, the Code's rules bind the employer and every worker on site, and they control who can enter, how they behave inside, and how they leave.

The Code's rules for a restricted area are specific. Only authorized persons may enter. The employer must post signs at every entry point so that nobody wanders in without knowing what the area contains. Inside, workers may not eat, drink or smoke. The employer must supply protective clothing, and workers must decontaminate before they leave the area, so fibres are not carried out on clothing or skin. These rules exist because the primary hazard is inhalation of airborne fibres, and the restricted area is the boundary that keeps that risk contained.

Every worker who enters a restricted area must have successfully completed a government-approved Alberta asbestos worker course. The course requires at least 14 net instructional hours, a written exam with a pass mark of 80 per cent, and a practical component. The card that comes from that course is valid for three years from the date of issue. If you are hiring a contractor, ask to see the original valid cards for every worker who will be inside the restricted area, not just the crew lead.

Before the restricted area is even set up, the employer is required by OHS Code section 36 to notify a Director at least 72 hours before beginning any activity that may release fibres. No minimum quantity triggers that requirement: it applies to any asbestos removal or abatement, and to any demolition or renovation of a building that contains asbestos. The notification is filed online through Alberta's asbestos portal. Nobody may begin the work until it has been submitted.

A few things worth asking a contractor before work starts:

- Has the 72-hour notification been filed, and can you see the confirmation?
- Will clearance air testing be done by a consultant independent of the abatement crew, and which lab will count the samples?
- How will waste be packaged and where will it go? For Calgary jobs, asbestos waste goes to Shepard landfill only, by appointment, with a permit.

Once the job is finished, keep a copy of the bulk-sample lab report that identified the material, the OHS notification confirmation, the air clearance letter with the fibre counts, and the Shepard landfill receipt showing the waste was accepted.

If you are looking for contractors who do this work in Calgary or the surrounding area, the request form on this page forwards your details to abatement contractors listed in the Calgary Construction Network directory.

Q2

Keeping asbestos dust from spreading through a Calgary house during removal?

Keeping asbestos fibres contained during removal is a legal duty, not just a precaution. The Alberta OHS Code sets out exactly what a contractor must do, and the Alberta Asbestos Abatement Manual describes the practical steps that meet those requirements.

What the contractor is required to do

Before anyone touches the material, the contractor must file a 72-hour notification through Alberta's asbestos portal. No work that may release fibres can begin until that notification is made. Every worker who enters the restricted area must carry an original, valid Alberta asbestos worker card, issued after a government-approved course of at least 14 net instructional hours and a written exam with a pass mark of 80 per cent.

Once work begins, the OHS Code requires the employer to establish a restricted area: posted signs, no eating, drinking or smoking inside, protective clothing supplied, and a decontamination procedure before anyone leaves. The Manual scales the controls to the risk class. For high-risk work it describes an enclosure held under negative pressure, so air is drawn into the work area rather than out of it, until air tests confirm fibre levels are low enough to take the enclosure down. The Code's own requirement is that the methods used to decontaminate the work area, the workers, equipment and clothing prevent airborne asbestos as much as is reasonably practicable. Ask the contractor to describe, in writing, how that will be done in your house.

The risk class shapes how tight the containment needs to be. Removing a small area of intact vinyl floor tile with hand tools and water is low risk; removing friable material covering 0.09 square metres or more, or any work where the exposure limit of 0.1 fibres per cubic centimetre may be exceeded, is high risk and calls for a full enclosure held under negative pressure until air tests confirm fibre levels are low enough to dismantle it.

The Code requires waste in sealed, impervious, labelled containers, and the City of Calgary's rule for Shepard is material wetted before bagging, double-bagged in 6-mil polyethylene and sealed. In Calgary, asbestos waste goes to Shepard landfill only, by appointment made before 10 a.m. the day prior, with an Industrial Waste Permit in hand.

A few things worth asking before you sign anything:

- Will containment be set up before any material is disturbed, and will negative pressure be maintained throughout?
- Who does the clearance air testing, and is it an independent consultant rather than the abatement crew itself? The Manual describes final air results below 0.01 fibres per cubic centimetre for moderate-risk work, with aggressive sampling if a containment was used.
- Can you see the workers' original asbestos cards, not photocopies?
- Is disposal at Shepard included, and will you get the landfill receipt?
- Does the contractor have a WCB clearance letter and liability insurance you can verify?

Under Alberta's consumer protection rules, a prepaid contract of \$200 or more must be in writing with itemized prices, a completion date and a statement of your cancellation rights; you can cancel within 10 days of receiving your written copy.

After the job is finished, keep the original bulk-sample lab report, a copy of the 72-hour OHS notification, the independent clearance letter with the air-test results, and the Shepard landfill receipt.

To hear from local abatement contractors, use the form on this page; your request goes to contractors listed in the Calgary Construction Network directory.

Q3

Is dry removal of asbestos ever allowed in Alberta?

Dry removal of friable asbestos-containing material is classified as high-risk work under the Alberta Asbestos Abatement Manual, The Manual does not describe it as banned; it places it in the high-risk class, with the full high-risk controls that come with that.

What the Manual and the OHS Code actually say

The Manual describes low-risk work as handling non-friable products without cutting, breaking, sanding or vibrating them, and moderate-risk work as using non-powered or HEPA-equipped powered tools on certain materials. Dry removal of friable material lands in the high-risk category, and where airborne asbestos may exceed the exposure limit the Alberta OHS Code makes the work area a restricted area: authorized persons only, posted signs, no eating or drinking, protective clothing supplied, and workers decontaminating before they leave. Every worker who enters that restricted area must carry an original, valid Alberta asbestos worker card, issued after at least 14 net instructional hours, an 80 per cent pass on a written exam and a pass on a practical. Cards expire three years from issue. The employer must also file the 72-hour notification through Alberta's asbestos portal before any work begins

that may release fibres, and nobody starts until that notification is on file.

For high-risk enclosures, the Manual describes keeping the area under negative pressure throughout the job and not dismantling the enclosure until air tests confirm fibre levels are low enough. That is the Manual's clearance test for high-risk work; the 0.01 fibres per cubic centimetre final figure is its rule for moderate-risk work.

A few practical points worth knowing:

- There is no contractor or company licence for asbestos abatement in Alberta. The credentials that exist in law are the worker card and the employer's notification. If a contractor says they are "licensed," ask to see the worker cards instead.
- The OHS Code sets no minimum quantity for the 72-hour notification. One square foot of friable material triggers it the same as a whole building.
- The City of Calgary's Shepard rule is that asbestos waste is wetted before bagging, double-bagged in 6-mil polyethylene and sealed, and the OHS Code requires sealed, labelled containers.
- The Alberta OHS Code lists asbestos as a class A1 carcinogen and requires asbestos waste containers to be labelled accordingly. Health Canada advises against disturbing asbestos-containing material and recommends hiring a qualified asbestos removal specialist.

If you are getting quotes for high-risk removal, ask each contractor whether clearance air testing will be done by a consultant independent of their own crew, and which lab will count the samples, because clearance sampling by the crew that did the removal is not independent. Also confirm the disposal plan: asbestos from Calgary jobs goes to Shepard landfill only, by appointment, with a permit, and loads with packaging defects can be turned away or hit with a \$275 hard-to-handle surcharge.

The one request worth making of every contractor: show containment, clearance testing and landfill disposal as separate line items, so two quotes can be compared honestly.

Should my furnace be off during asbestos abatement in Calgary?

The sources we rely on do not set a furnace rule for homeowners, so treat this as a question for the contractor's plan. The Alberta OHS Code requires the employer to minimize the release of asbestos into the air as far as reasonably practicable and to keep a restricted area controlled, and the Alberta Asbestos Abatement Manual lists work on air-handling equipment and furnaces among high-risk tasks. How the heating system is kept out of the work area is part of meeting those duties.

What to ask about the heating system

Ask the contractor to explain, in writing, what will happen to the furnace and ductwork serving the work area during the job.

A few things worth confirming with your contractor:

- Whether the furnace and ventilation will be running during the work, and how the work area is kept separate from them
- When the system can be used again, and what will be checked first if the work was near ductwork or the furnace
- Whether clearance air testing will be done by a consultant independent of the abatement crew, and which lab will count the samples

On clearance testing: the Manual describes final air results below 0.01 fibres per cubic centimetre for moderate-risk work, and air monitoring below that level during all phases of low-risk work. For high-risk enclosures, the containment stays under negative pressure until air results confirm it is safe to dismantle. Having an independent consultant collect those samples, rather than the abatement crew itself, gives you a cleaner result.

One more practical point: if the abatement is happening in a pre-1990 Calgary home and a building or demolition permit is involved, the City of Calgary's Asbestos Abatement Information Form must be submitted before that permit is released. The 72-hour notification to Alberta OHS is the contractor's responsibility and must be filed before any work that may release fibres begins.

If you are ready to get quotes, the form on this page sends your request to local Calgary abatement contractors listed in the Calgary Construction Network directory. The single most useful thing to get in writing is when the heating system can safely run again.

Disclaimer: This guide is provided for informational purposes only by Calgary Mold Remediation. It does not constitute professional advice. Always consult qualified, licensed contractors and your local building authority (the City of Calgary or your own municipality) and Alberta Occupational Health and Safety before starting any asbestos, mould or lead paint project. Information is current as of October 25, 2026 and may change. Visit calgarymoldremediation.com for the latest answers.