

CALGARY MOLD REMEDIATION

Clearance & Air Testing

Final air sampling after abatement, the 0.01 f/cc target, PCM versus TEM, independence of the sampler, and post-remediation checks for mold

4 Expert Answers from Remediation IQ

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Q1

Visual inspection before asbestos air clearance in Alberta, what is checked?

Visual Inspection and Air Clearance in Alberta

The sources we rely on for Alberta do not publish a visual-inspection checklist for the end of an asbestos job, so we cannot tell you item by item what the inspector must look at. What they do set is the air result the job has to reach, and who should be checking it is something you can ask about before the work starts.

The Alberta Asbestos Abatement Manual sorts abatement into low, moderate and high risk. For moderate-risk work, final air monitoring results must be less than 0.01 fibres per cubic centimetre, and the Manual says aggressive sampling techniques should be used for that final sampling if a containment was used. For high-risk work, the enclosure stays under negative pressure until air-monitoring tests confirm fibre levels are low enough to dismantle it. For low-risk work, 0.01 is a level air monitoring should stay below during all phases of the work, not a final clearance step.

A few points matter for the homeowner arranging this:

- Ask for the visual inspection and the air sampling to be done by a consultant independent of the abatement crew, and agree that before the job starts.
- Ask the consultant what they will look at before they sample, and ask for it in writing. Since no Alberta checklist is published, their written answer is the scope you are paying for.
- The lab method matters. PCM (NIOSH 7400) counts fibres but cannot distinguish asbestos from other fibres; TEM (NIOSH 7402) positively identifies asbestos. Ask which method the consultant's lab will use and whether the lab participates in a proficiency testing program.
- Ask whether the clearance report will describe what was inspected as well as listing the air results.

Published Calgary-area prices for air clearance testing run roughly \$200 to \$700 per area, depending on the number of samples collected and whether a written report is included.

Before you commit to an abatement contractor, ask them directly who will conduct the visual inspection and collect the clearance samples, and confirm that person works independently of the removal crew.

Q2

What result means a Calgary room is cleared after asbestos removal?

After asbestos abatement, the Alberta Asbestos Abatement Manual describes the clearance standard by risk class. For low-risk work, air monitoring should stay below 0.01 fibres per cubic centimetre during all phases of the work. For moderate-risk work, final air results must be less than 0.01 fibres per cubic centimetre, with aggressive sampling required if a containment was used. For high-risk work, the enclosure stays under negative pressure until air tests confirm fibre levels are low enough to dismantle the containment safely.

What the numbers mean in practice

The Alberta OHS Code's occupational exposure limit for asbestos is 0.1 fibres per cubic centimetre; the 0.01 figure above is the Manual's final clearance level for moderate-risk work. Clearance sampling is the measured check that fibre levels came down before drywall, flooring or insulation goes back in.

The lab method matters too. PCM (NIOSH 7400) counts all fibres in an air sample but cannot distinguish asbestos from other mineral fibres, and TEM (NIOSH 7402) positively identifies asbestos fibres; ask which one your consultant's lab will use. The Manual says labs should participate in a proficiency testing program; Alberta law does not require lab accreditation, so it is worth asking the consultant which lab they use and whether it participates in such a program.

One practical point: clearance sampling done by the same crew that performed the abatement is a conflict of interest. Ask for a consultant who is independent of the abatement contractor, and confirm that consultant will be the one submitting samples to the lab and interpreting the results. Published Calgary-area prices read in September 2026 put air clearance testing at roughly \$200 to \$700 per area, depending on the number of samples and whether a written report is included.

For a Calgary renovation or demolition, the City's Asbestos Abatement Information Form requires a declaration that all materials with the potential to release fibres have been removed from the project area and disposed of properly before a building or demolition permit is released. If the abatement happens after a permit issues because material was found mid-project, the City requires that work stop immediately, that the Alberta OHS 72-hour notification be filed, and that a building permit revision be submitted. The clearance letter confirming the area is acceptable for demolition must be provided to the authority having jurisdiction at the time of inspection.

Contractors who reply through the form on this page should be able to answer all four of those questions.

Before you accept any quote, ask the contractor to spell out in writing exactly what the clearance line item covers: who collects the samples, which lab analyzes them, which method is used, and whether the written clearance report is included in the price or billed separately.

Is a clearance letter needed for renovations too, or only Calgary demolitions?

Clearance letters are specifically named in Calgary's demolition permit process, not in its renovation permit process. For renovations, the City's requirement is the Asbestos Abatement Information Form, which must be submitted before a building permit is released.

What each permit process actually requires

For a **demolition permit**, Calgary's demolition permit guide is explicit: a copy of the asbestos assessment (showing the number of samples and their locations) and a clearance letter stating that all asbestos materials have been properly removed and the area is acceptable for demolition must be provided to the authority having jurisdiction at the time of inspection.

For a **renovation building permit**, the City requires the Asbestos Abatement Information Form before the permit is released. On that form, the applicant declares either that all materials with the potential to release fibres have been removed from the project area and disposed of at an approved landfill, or that there are none in the project area. The form's own FAQ notes that a building permit is not a permit to perform asbestos abatement work, and that jurisdiction for the abatement itself sits with the Government of Alberta, not the City.

So the short answer is: a formal clearance letter is a named requirement for demolition, not for a renovation permit. That said, clearance testing after renovation abatement is described by the Alberta Asbestos Abatement Manual as best practice, regardless of what the City's form asks for.

On the OHS side, the 72-hour notification to a Director under the Alberta OHS Code applies to both demolition and renovation work where asbestos fibres may be released. That notification must be filed before work begins, and nobody may start until it is made. The Code sets no minimum quantity that triggers this requirement.

The Manual describes clearance air-sampling thresholds for moderate-risk and high-risk work: final results below 0.01 fibres per cubic centimetre, with aggressive sampling if a containment was used for moderate-risk work, and negative pressure maintained in high-risk enclosures until air tests confirm fibre levels are low enough to dismantle. These are best-practice benchmarks, not a City permit condition, but a contractor doing renovation abatement should be following them regardless.

A practical note: if asbestos is found after a renovation permit has already been issued, the City's guidance is to stop work immediately, file the OHS notification, and submit a building permit revision. Material elsewhere in the building that remains undisturbed and out of scope is not considered to have the potential to release fibres.

When you get quotes for renovation abatement, ask each contractor to spell out in writing whether clearance air testing is included in the price, who conducts it, and which lab counts the samples, because accepting clearance sampling done by the abatement crew itself is a conflict of interest worth avoiding.

Before signing anything, ask the contractor to show you exactly what the disposal line item covers, including packaging, transport and the Shepard tipping fees (the City's permit itself has no fee), so nothing appears as an extra after the work is done.

How long do clearance air test results take in Calgary?

Turnaround for clearance air results is set by the lab and the analytical method, so ask the consultant for their lab's turnaround in writing before the job is scheduled. The cost for clearance testing runs roughly \$200 to \$700 per area, depending on the number of samples taken and whether a written report is included.

A few things affect how quickly you get results. Phase contrast microscopy (PCM, NIOSH 7400) counts fibres in air but cannot distinguish asbestos from other fibres. Transmission electron microscopy (TEM, NIOSH 7402) positively identifies asbestos fibres. The Alberta Asbestos Abatement Manual describes both methods and notes that labs should participate in a proficiency testing program, though Alberta law does not require lab accreditation.

What the clearance standard actually is

The Alberta Asbestos Abatement Manual describes the air levels: during low-risk work, monitoring results should stay below 0.01 fibres per cubic centimetre in all phases; for moderate-risk work with a containment, final results must be less than 0.01 fibres per cubic centimetre with aggressive sampling; for high-risk enclosures, the containment stays under negative pressure until air tests confirm fibre levels are low enough to dismantle. These are the figures that drive how long the whole clearance process takes, not just the lab turnaround.

A few things worth asking before you accept a clearance result:

- Who collected the samples? Ask for a consultant independent of the abatement crew; the same company doing the removal and then signing off on the clearance is a conflict worth questioning.
- Which lab is processing the samples, and which method are they using?
- Does the quote include a written clearance letter, or just raw numbers? The City of Calgary's demolition permit guide requires a clearance letter stating all asbestos materials have been properly removed and the area is acceptable for demolition, so if a permit is involved you need that letter in writing.
- Is aggressive sampling included if a containment was used?

The 72-hour OHS notification that the contractor must file before work begins is separate from clearance; it does not add to lab turnaround time.

And if the material was disturbed before any of this was arranged: stop the work, leave the area, keep everyone including pets out, close the door, do not sweep or vacuum, and get it tested first.

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.