

Permits & Notification

The 72-hour Alberta OHS notification, the City of Calgary Asbestos Abatement Form, demolition permits in Calgary and nearby towns, and what a building permit does not cover

4 Expert Answers from Remediation IQ

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Okotoks demolition permit, do they ask about asbestos?

Okotoks requires a demolition permit, but the Town's permit pages do not include a specific asbestos checklist item the way Calgary's do. For anything the Town has not published, check directly with the Town of Okotoks before you start.

What is published for Okotoks: a demolition permit is required. No asbestos rule was found on Okotoks's permit pages, so you cannot assume the Town will ask for an asbestos report or a clearance letter as a condition of issuing the permit. That is different from Calgary, where the Asbestos Abatement Information Form must be submitted before a demolition permit is released for buildings built before 1990.

What Alberta OHS requires regardless of the permit

Even if the Town does not ask, the Alberta OHS Code still applies to any contractor you hire. Under section 36 of the Code, an employer responsible for removing asbestos or demolishing a building containing asbestos must file a notification with an Alberta Director at least 72 hours before beginning any activity that may release fibres, and no work may start until that notification is filed. This applies at no minimum quantity. Every worker who enters an asbestos restricted area must hold a valid government-approved Alberta asbestos worker card, issued after a course of at least 14 instructional hours with an 80 per cent written pass mark and a practical component. Cards expire three years from issue, so ask to see the original.

For disposal, the Town's Eco Centre page points local contractors to the Foothills Regional Landfill and Resource Recovery Centre, where demolition and asbestos loads need the manager's approval before hauling. Do not haul without confirming that approval first.

Before demolition begins, Health Canada's advice is to hire a professional to test for asbestos. Lab analysis by polarized light microscopy (PLM) runs roughly \$65 to \$145 per sample, with package rates available. If asbestos is found, the contractor removes it before demolition proceeds, after filing the OHS notification; ask the Town whether it wants a clearance letter. Ask for a clearance test done by a consultant independent of the abatement crew, and ask which lab will count the samples.

Because the Town of Okotoks has not published a specific asbestos requirement on its permit pages, your first call should be to the Town's planning or development office to ask exactly what documentation they want before they release a demolition permit. That one call tells you whether a pre-demolition asbestos assessment is a condition of the permit in Okotoks, and it saves you from either over-preparing or being stopped mid-project.

Does the Alberta OHS Code apply to a homeowner doing their own reno?

Who the Alberta OHS Code Actually Covers

The OHS Code binds employers and workers. Alberta's OHS Act defines "occupation" in a way that excludes work done in or around a private dwelling by an owner or occupant who lives there, as long as that work is not being done for an employer. So if you are renovating your own home and you are doing the work yourself, the OHS Code's technical requirements, the 72-hour notification, the worker card, the restricted-area rules, do not apply to you personally.

That changes the moment you hire anyone. A contractor working in your home is an employer or a worker under the Act, and every Part 4 duty applies to them: the 72-hour asbestos notification filed through Alberta's online portal before any fibre-releasing work begins, an approved asbestos worker card carried by every worker who enters a restricted area, sealed and impervious labelled containers for all asbestos waste. The Alberta Asbestos Abatement Manual adds clearance air testing as best practice. The contractor carries those obligations, not you, but you are the one who needs to confirm they are meeting them before work starts.

Where it gets complicated is the health guidance that sits alongside the law. Alberta Environment advises against disturbing friable asbestos-containing materials and says handling should be restricted to qualified personnel. Health Canada says not to disturb vermiculite or attempt to remove it yourself, and to hire professionals trained to handle asbestos if you plan to renovate. Neither of those is the OHS Code, and neither of them says a homeowner is legally prohibited from touching material in their own home. What they say is: do not disturb it, and if it needs to come out, bring in someone qualified. That is practical advice worth taking seriously.

A few things worth keeping in mind as you plan:

- If you have already disturbed something and are not sure what it is, stop the work, leave the area, keep others and pets out, close the door, do not sweep or vacuum, and have the material tested before anyone goes back in.
- In a home built before 1990, Alberta OHS bulletin ASB004 names drywall mud, vinyl floor tile, ceiling tiles, plaster and pipe insulation among materials that may contain asbestos, and the Alberta Asbestos Abatement Manual adds stipple and acoustic finishes and others. Test before you cut, sand or remove anything in that list.
- The City of Calgary requires an Asbestos Abatement Information Form before releasing a building or demolition permit for pre-1990 structures. A building permit is not a permit to do abatement work; jurisdiction for that sits with the Government of Alberta.

- Any contractor you hire for a prepaid job of \$200 or more must give you a written contract that includes a description of the work, itemized prices, a completion date and your cancellation rights.

Before you commit to anyone for this job, ask them directly: has the 72-hour OHS notification been filed, can each worker show you their original Alberta asbestos worker card, and who will issue the independent clearance letter once the work is done?

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Is there a minimum amount of asbestos that triggers Alberta notification?

No minimum quantity triggers the Alberta notification requirement. The OHS Code, section 36, says an employer must notify a Director at least 72 hours before beginning any activity that may release asbestos fibres during removal, abatement, demolition or renovation, and the Code sets no floor on the amount involved.

That means a single floor tile, a short run of pipe wrap or a small patch of stipple ceiling in a pre-1990 home can trigger the duty if disturbing it may release fibres. The notification is filed online through Alberta's asbestos notification portal before work begins, and nobody may start until it has been filed. It is not a permit; it is a filing that puts Alberta OHS on notice that the work is happening.

The Alberta Asbestos Abatement Manual does describe risk classes, and the class shapes how much protective work surrounds the job, not whether notification applies. Low-risk work, such as carefully lifting an intact vinyl asbestos floor tile without breaking it, generates fewer fibres than high-risk work such as dry-removing friable insulation from a boiler. But the OHS Code's notification threshold is the same in both cases: if fibres may be released, the employer notifies first.

A few practical points worth knowing:

- The worker card requirement is separate. Every worker who enters an asbestos restricted area must hold a current government-approved Alberta asbestos worker card. Cards expire three years from issue, so ask to see the original.
- There is no contractor licence for asbestos abatement in Alberta. The legal credentials are the worker card and the employer's notification. A contractor who says it is licensed for asbestos is describing a credential Alberta does not issue.
- The City of Calgary adds its own layer for renovations and demolitions: the Asbestos Abatement Information Form must be submitted before a building or demolition permit is released for buildings constructed before 1990.

- Clearance air testing after the work is done is described in the Alberta Asbestos Abatement Manual as best practice, not a Code requirement, but it is the measured evidence that fibre levels came down. The Manual describes a target of below 0.01 fibres per cubic centimetre for moderate-risk work.

Before you sign a contract for any asbestos job, ask the contractor to show you, in writing, exactly what the quote includes for containment, clearance air testing and disposal at Shepard, so the final invoice holds no surprises.

Asbestos worker course in Alberta, how many hours?

The Alberta OHS Code requires that every worker who enters an asbestos restricted area must have successfully completed a course approved by a Director of Occupational Health and Safety. That course must include at least 14 net instructional hours, a written exam with a pass mark of 80 per cent, and a practical component that must also be passed.

The worker carries the original valid certificate on site. Alberta sets a three-year expiry on the card, so a worker whose card was issued more than three years ago is not in compliance, regardless of experience. There is no company or contractor licence for asbestos abatement in Alberta. The credentials that exist in law are the individual worker card and the employer's 72-hour notification filed through Alberta's asbestos portal before work begins.

When you are hiring, this matters in a practical way. Ask to see the actual cards, not a photocopy or a company letter. Check the issue date on each card against the three-year window. If a crew of three is doing the work, all three need current cards, not just the supervisor. The Alberta OHS Code also requires the employer to notify a Director at least 72 hours before any work that may release asbestos fibres, and no work may start until that notification is filed. Ask the contractor to show you the notification confirmation before anyone sets foot in the work area.

One other point worth knowing: the Alberta OHS Code lists asbestos as a class A1 carcinogen and requires abatement waste to be labelled accordingly. Health Canada advises against disturbing asbestos-containing material. These rules exist to protect workers, and the card and notification requirements are the mechanism Alberta uses to enforce that protection on a job-by-job basis.

The question to ask before any crew starts: can you see the current worker card for every person entering the restricted area, and the filed 72-hour notification for your address?

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.