

CALGARY MOLD REMEDIATION

Renovation & Demolition

Pre-renovation surveys, what to do when asbestos turns up mid-job, infill tear-downs and the paperwork an inspector asks for

4 Expert Answers from Remediation IQ

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Planning a basement reno in a 1960s Calgary house, test for asbestos first?

Yes, test before you touch anything. A 1960s Calgary home falls squarely in the pre-1990 window identified by Alberta OHS bulletin ASB004, meaning there is a higher risk that some materials used in its construction may contain asbestos.

In a basement renovation, the materials worth testing before work begins include drywall joint compound, plaster, vinyl floor tiles, vinyl sheet flooring, pipe insulation, mechanical insulation, and any stippled or acoustic finishes on ceilings or walls. The Alberta Asbestos Abatement Manual adds floor mastic, levelling compound, and brick or block mortar to that list. These materials do not all look suspicious, and some, like joint compound, may not have been mixed evenly, so asbestos content can vary from one wall to the next in the same house.

What testing involves and what it costs

A qualified assessor takes bulk samples, sends them to a lab using polarized light microscopy, and gives you a written report. Published Calgary-area prices run \$65 to \$145 per sample, with packages of several samples costing less per sample. For a full basement with multiple material types, expect to collect samples from each distinct material. A hazardous materials assessment covering the whole project area is quoted per building; few Calgary firms publish a flat price, so ask for a written scope and quote.

If any material tests positive and your renovation will disturb it, the contractor is required under the Alberta OHS Code to file a 72-hour notification with Alberta before work begins, and no abatement work may start until that notification is made. The City of Calgary also requires an Asbestos Abatement Information Form before releasing a building or demolition permit; the applicant declares that all materials with the potential to release fibres have been removed from the project area or that none are present. The building permit itself is not a permit to do abatement work: the City's own FAQ is clear on that point.

When you are getting quotes for the abatement work itself, ask each contractor:

- Whether workers hold a current government-approved Alberta asbestos worker card (ask to see it, cards expire three years from issue)
- Whether the 72-hour OHS notification will be filed before work begins
- Whether clearance air testing will be done by a consultant independent of the abatement crew, and which lab will count the samples
- How waste will be packaged and disposed of (asbestos waste goes to Shepard landfill only, by appointment, in double-bagged 6-mil polyethylene, wetted and sealed)

A prepaid contract of \$200 or more must be in writing under Alberta consumer protection rules, and you can

request a WCB clearance letter online to confirm the contractor's account is in good standing before work starts. After the job is finished, keep the lab report from the bulk sampling, a copy of the OHS notification, the clearance letter confirming air test results, and the Shepard landfill receipt.

To get the testing booked, the form on this page goes to abatement contractors listed in the Calgary Construction Network directory.

Q2

Kitchen gut in a Killarney home, what should be tested first?

If your Killarney home was built before 1990, Alberta OHS bulletin ASB004 says there is a higher risk that some materials used in its construction may contain asbestos. Get a hazardous materials assessment done before any demolition work begins, not after.

What to have tested in a kitchen gut

A pre-renovation survey covers the materials the gut will disturb. In a kitchen, those include:

- Drywall joint compound and plaster (the Alberta Asbestos Abatement Manual adds stipple and acoustic finishes to the list)
- Vinyl sheet flooring and vinyl floor tiles (the Manual notes vinyl floor tiles usually contain about 10 per cent asbestos by weight)
- Ceiling tiles and any textured or stippled ceiling finish
- Pipe insulation on supply or drain lines running through the space
- Duct tape and wrap on any heating ducts

If the home was built before 1960, Health Canada says it probably contains lead-based paint, and exterior surfaces built between 1960 and 1990 may also contain it. Ask the assessor to include a lead check on painted surfaces you plan to sand or strip.

A qualified assessor takes bulk samples and sends them to a lab for polarized light microscopy analysis. Published Calgary-area prices for bulk sample lab testing run \$65 to \$145 per sample, with packages of several samples costing less per sample. A full pre-renovation hazardous materials assessment is quoted per building; few Calgary firms publish a flat price, so ask each contractor for a written quote.

Do not cut, drill, sand or pry any surface until you have results back. The Alberta Asbestos Abatement Manual notes that joint compound and stipple may not have been mixed evenly, so asbestos content can vary within a

single home. A small hole in the wrong spot is not a low-risk task.

Once results are back, the picture becomes clearer. If asbestos-containing material is confirmed, the contractor working in your home is bound by Alberta OHS Code Part 4: they must file a 72-hour notification with Alberta before any work that may release fibres, every worker entering a restricted area must carry a current government-approved Alberta asbestos worker card, and all waste must be stored in sealed, impervious, labelled containers. For disposal in Calgary, asbestos goes to Shepard landfill only, by permit and appointment, at \$220 per tonne since February 2026. The City of Calgary also requires an Asbestos Abatement Information Form before it releases a building or demolition permit, so have the assessment report ready when you apply.

Ask for clearance air testing done by a consultant independent of the abatement crew, and confirm which lab will count the samples.

If you want to reach local Calgary abatement contractors directly, the request form on this page sends your details to contractors listed in the Calgary Construction Network directory.

Before you commit to any abatement scope, ask the contractor to show you the 72-hour notification confirmation number so you know the filing was actually made.

Q3

Can my Calgary contractor keep working near asbestos in another room?

It depends on whether the work will disturb the material. Alberta's OHS Code says that when a building is being altered or renovated, the employer must ensure that materials in the area of the alterations that could release asbestos fibres are encapsulated, enclosed or removed. A general contractor running a crew in an adjacent room is still an employer bound by those rules, and the Code says a building is in an unsafe condition if fibres may be released anywhere in it.

Here is what the rules actually require before anyone keeps working.

What Alberta OHS requires

The OHS Code sets out three duties that apply the moment asbestos-containing material is identified or reasonably suspected in a renovation scope. First, the employer responsible for the abatement must file a notification with a Director at least 72 hours before any activity that may release fibres, and no such work may start until that filing is made. Second, every worker who enters an asbestos restricted area must carry an original, valid Alberta asbestos worker certificate issued after completing a government-approved course of at least 14 instructional hours, with a

pass mark of 80 per cent written and a practical component. Third, waste must be stored and transported in sealed, impervious, labelled containers. There is no minimum quantity that exempts a job from these duties.

The City of Calgary adds its own layer. For any building permit or demolition permit on a pre-1990 structure, the City's Asbestos Abatement Information Form must be submitted before the permit releases. If asbestos is discovered after a permit has already issued, the City's form says to stop work immediately, provide the OHS notification as required, and submit a building permit revision. Material elsewhere in the building that remains undisturbed and out of scope does not trigger the form, but the moment a crew is working near it, that boundary matters.

A few practical points worth raising with your contractor:

- The risk class of the material (low, moderate or high, as described in the Alberta Asbestos Abatement Manual) shapes what controls are needed, but the 72-hour notification applies regardless of risk class.
- Air testing after abatement confirms fibre levels are low enough before the enclosure or containment comes down. For moderate-risk work the Manual sets a final result of less than 0.01 fibres per cubic centimetre; for high-risk work the enclosure stays under negative pressure until the air results are low enough to dismantle it. Ask for that testing to be done by a consultant independent of the abatement crew, and ask which lab will count the samples.
- There is no contractor or company licence for asbestos abatement in Alberta. The credentials that exist in law are the worker certificate and the employer's filed notification.

Before you let any work continue, ask your contractor to show you the 72-hour notification confirmation number, the worker certificates for everyone entering the restricted area, and who will issue the independent clearance letter once abatement is done.

If you need an abatement contractor for the other room, the form on this page reaches contractors in the Calgary Construction Network directory.

Adding a basement suite in Calgary, asbestos testing needed?

If your home was built before 1990, testing before you start is the practical way to complete the City of Calgary's permit paperwork. The City's Asbestos Abatement Information Form must be submitted before a building permit is released for renovation work, and the applicant must declare either that no asbestos-containing materials are present in the project area, or that any such materials have already been removed and disposed of properly.

To make that declaration honestly, you need bulk samples tested by a lab. Published Calgary-area prices for asbestos bulk sample testing run \$65 to \$145 per sample, with package rates bringing the per-sample cost down. A basement suite conversion can disturb several material types at once, so the number of samples adds up quickly.

What drives the sample count

A pre-renovation survey looks at every material in the work area that could contain asbestos. For a basement suite, that can mean:

- Drywall joint compound and stipple or acoustic finishes on ceilings or walls
- Vinyl sheet flooring or floor tiles and the mastic beneath them
- Pipe insulation on any mechanical runs through the space
- Duct tape or wrap on the furnace and ducts

Alberta OHS bulletin ASB004 names drywall mud, vinyl floor tile and sheet flooring, pipe insulation and duct tape or wrap for pre-1990 buildings; stipple and acoustic finishes and floor mastic come from the Alberta Asbestos Abatement Manual. The Manual notes that joint compound and stipple may not have been mixed evenly, so asbestos content can vary within a single house, which is why sampling each distinct material and location matters rather than assuming one result covers everything.

If any sample comes back positive, the contractor working in your home is bound by Alberta OHS Code Part 4. That means filing a 72-hour notification through Alberta's online asbestos portal before any work that may release fibres begins, posting the work area as a restricted zone, and ensuring every worker who enters holds a current government-approved Alberta asbestos worker card. Asbestos waste leaves the site double-bagged in 6-mil polyethylene, sealed, and goes to Shepard landfill only, by appointment, with an Industrial Waste Permit in place.

When you get quotes for the survey and any abatement that follows, a fair scope includes the written lab report with sample locations mapped, confirmation that the 72-hour OHS notification will be filed if abatement is needed, a clearance air test done by an independent consultant after the work is finished, and documentation of disposal. Ask to see the worker cards before anyone starts, and ask whether clearance sampling will be done by the abatement

crew or by a separate consultant. Independent clearance is the more reliable option.

The City is clear that a building permit is not a permit to perform abatement work; that authority sits with the Government of Alberta. So even if your permit is in hand, the OHS notification and the worker card requirements still apply to whoever does the removal.

If you want to reach local Calgary contractors who handle pre-renovation asbestos surveys and abatement, the request form on this page sends your details to contractors listed in the Calgary Construction Network directory.

The one question to put to any contractor here: will they show you the lab report format they use, and is the clearance test in their price or billed separately?

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.