

CALGARY MOLD REMEDIATION

Vermiculite Insulation

Vermiculite in Calgary attics and walls: testing,
leaving it sealed versus removing it, and what
removal involves

4 Expert Answers from Remediation IQ

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Vermiculite in a Calgary attic with knob and tube wiring, a double problem?

Both issues are real, but they are separate problems that need to be handled in sequence, not at the same time. Vermiculite removal in an attic runs roughly \$5,000 to \$25,000 depending on the attic's size, depth, access and whether re-insulation is included; the knob and tube wiring is a separate electrical job and is quoted separately.

Why the Sequence Matters

Vermiculite insulation, including the Zonolite brand produced from a Libby, Montana mine, may be contaminated with asbestos, according to the Alberta Asbestos Abatement Manual. The only way to know whether yours contains asbestos is to have it tested. Bulk sample lab analysis runs \$65 to \$145 per sample, with packages of several samples costing less per sample. Health Canada's advice is clear: do not disturb vermiculite or attempt to remove it yourself. If you are not renovating, leaving it sealed is a legitimate option; the federal government says there is currently no evidence of risk to your health if it is isolated in an attic. The problem with knob and tube wiring is that an electrician working in that attic would disturb the vermiculite, potentially releasing fibres, before anyone knows whether asbestos is present. So the right order is: test first, get results, then decide on abatement before any electrical work begins.

If the lab confirms asbestos, the abatement contractor must file a 72-hour notification with Alberta OHS before work begins, under the Alberta OHS Code. Every worker who enters the restricted area must carry a valid, government-approved Alberta asbestos worker card. The City of Calgary's Asbestos Abatement Information Form must be submitted before a building permit or demolition permit is released for any renovation or demolition of a pre-1990 building. Asbestos waste from the attic can only go to the Shepard landfill, by appointment, with an Industrial Waste Permit, at \$220 per tonne since February 2026. Material must be wetted before bagging, double-bagged in 6-mil polyethylene, and sealed; loads with rips or openings can be turned away or charged a \$275 hard-to-handle surcharge.

What a fair quote for the vermiculite work should include:

- Bulk sampling and lab analysis before removal begins
- A written scope covering containment, waste packaging and Shepard disposal
- Air clearance testing after removal, done by a consultant independent of the abatement crew, with the enclosure kept under negative pressure until the results are low enough to take it down
- Worker cards available to inspect on request
- Confirmation that the 72-hour OHS notification has been filed

A prepaid contract of \$200 or more must be in writing under Alberta consumer protection rules, with itemized prices,

a completion date and a statement of your cancellation rights. Ask to see the contractor's WCB clearance letter before work starts, confirming their account is in good standing.

The price range for vermiculite removal is wide because attic size, insulation depth, access difficulty and whether re-insulation is bundled in all move the number significantly. Get at least two written quotes that itemize those elements separately.

When contractors reply through the form on this page, ask each for the vermiculite test before the electrician is booked.

Settle one thing in writing first: who pays if the first air test comes back too high and the work has to be redone.

Q2

Vermiculite found during an Evergreen attic project, stop work?

Vermiculite in an Evergreen Attic: What to Do Right Now

Stop the attic work, yes. Health Canada advises against disturbing vermiculite or attempting to remove it yourself, and Alberta Environment's guidance says not to disturb friable asbestos-containing materials and to restrict handling to qualified personnel. Until the vermiculite is tested, treat it as though it contains asbestos and keep everyone, including pets, out of the attic.

The reason for caution is specific to the material. The Alberta Asbestos Abatement Manual notes that some vermiculite insulation, including the Zonolite brand produced from a Libby, Montana mine from the 1920s to 1990, may be contaminated with asbestos, and the only way to know is to have it tested. A bulk sample analyzed by polarized light microscopy (PLM) runs roughly \$65 to \$145 per sample at published Calgary-area prices; a package of several samples costs less per sample. Ask the tester how many samples the attic needs.

Evergreen is within Calgary, so the City's rules apply. If testing confirms asbestos and removal goes ahead, the contractor must file a 72-hour notification with Alberta OHS before any work that may release fibres, and every worker entering the restricted area must carry an original, valid Alberta asbestos worker card. The City's Asbestos Abatement Information Form must be submitted before a building or demolition permit is released for any pre-1990 renovation, so if your attic project involves a permit, that form is part of the process. Asbestos waste from the removal goes to Shepard landfill only, double-bagged in 6-mil polyethylene, wetted and sealed, with a permit and a booked appointment made by 10 a.m. the day before. The current City rate is \$220 per tonne, with a \$275 hard-to-handle surcharge if packaging is not right.

Vermiculite attic removal runs \$5,000 to \$25,000 at published Calgary-area prices, driven by attic size, insulation depth, how accessible the space is, and whether re-insulating is included in the scope. Before you get quotes, here is what a fair one should address:

- Bulk sample testing before removal begins, with written results
- The 72-hour OHS notification, filed before work starts
- Containment and decontamination procedures (ask what they are, not just that they exist)
- Air clearance testing after removal, roughly \$200 to \$700 per area, done by a consultant independent of the abatement crew
- Disposal at Shepard, with the permit and appointment confirmed in writing
- Worker cards: ask to see them, because there is no company licence for asbestos abatement in Alberta, only individual worker certification

If you are not planning to renovate, leaving vermiculite sealed and undisturbed is a legitimate option: the federal government says there is currently no evidence of risk to your health if it is isolated in an attic and kept out of the living space.

If a prepaid contract of \$200 or more is involved, it must be in writing with itemized prices, a completion date and a statement of your cancellation rights; check that the contractor holds a Service Alberta prepaid contracting licence before handing over any deposit.

The form on this page will put the job in front of abatement contractors in the Calgary Construction Network directory.

When you get quotes, ask each contractor to show you exactly what the clearance testing covers and who pays if the air results come back above the threshold and the work has to be redone.

Q3

Vermiculite and a new bathroom fan in Calgary, what are the risks?

Installing a bathroom fan in an attic that contains vermiculite is a real concern, and the core issue is this: Health Canada advises that you should not disturb vermiculite or attempt to remove it yourself, and that you should hire professionals trained to handle asbestos if you plan to renovate.

The reason is straightforward. The Alberta Asbestos Abatement Manual notes that some vermiculite insulation, including the Zonolite brand produced from a Libby, Montana mine from the 1920s to 1990, may be contaminated

with asbestos, and the only way to know is to have it tested. Looking at vermiculite does not tell you whether it contains asbestos. Cutting a hole for a fan housing, running ductwork or even walking through the attic to reach the work area can disturb it. If the attic has not been tested, that step comes first.

What the rules mean for this job

A bulk sample lab test runs roughly \$65 to \$145 per sample in the Calgary area, with packages of several samples costing less per sample. If asbestos is confirmed, vermiculite attic removal runs \$5,000 to \$25,000 depending on attic size, depth, access and whether re-insulating is included. Those are wide ranges because every attic is different.

On the contractor's side, the Alberta OHS Code requires that any employer removing asbestos-containing material notify a Director at least 72 hours before beginning work that may release fibres, filed online through Alberta's asbestos notification portal. Every worker who enters an asbestos restricted area must carry an original, valid Alberta asbestos worker card, issued after a government-approved course of at least 14 instructional hours and a written exam with a pass mark of 80 per cent. There is no contractor licence for asbestos abatement in Alberta; the credentials that exist in law are the worker card and the employer's notification.

The City of Calgary also requires that its Asbestos Abatement Information Form be submitted before a building permit is released for renovation work in buildings built before 1990. A building permit is not a permit to perform abatement; jurisdiction for the work sits with Alberta OHS.

If asbestos is confirmed and removed, disposal goes to Shepard landfill only, by appointment made before 10 a.m. the day prior, Monday to Friday 8:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Material must be wetted before bagging, double-bagged in 6-mil polyethylene and sealed. The City's current rate is \$220 per tonne, with a \$275 per load hard-to-handle surcharge for loads with rips or openings.

A few things worth asking any contractor before work begins:

- Have they filed the 72-hour OHS notification, and can they show you the confirmation?
- Will clearance air testing be done by a consultant independent of the abatement crew, and which lab will count the samples?
- Does their quote include disposal at Shepard, and will they provide the landfill receipt?

If a prepaid contract of \$200 or more is involved, it must be in writing with itemized prices, a completion date and a statement of your cancellation rights; you can check whether the business holds a prepaid contracting licence through Service Alberta's licensed-business search.

After the job is finished, keep the lab report, the OHS notification confirmation, the clearance letter and the Shepard landfill receipt together in one place.

Can vermiculite be sealed in place in an Alberta attic?

Leaving vermiculite sealed and undisturbed in an attic is a legitimate option when you are not renovating. The federal government says there is currently no evidence of risk to your health if the insulation is sealed behind wallboards and floorboards, isolated in an attic, or otherwise kept out of the living space. The key word is undisturbed: once the material is disturbed, the calculus changes entirely.

When Sealing in Place Makes Sense

Health Canada's advice for vermiculite in an attic is practical: do not use the attic for storage, keep children out, do not disturb it, and seal openings and cracks. If your attic hatch is rarely opened, no trades are working up there, and no renovations are planned, leaving it alone and simply not disturbing it is a defensible decision. The Alberta Asbestos Abatement Manual notes that some vermiculite, including the Zonolite brand produced from a Libby, Montana mine from the 1920s to 1990, may be contaminated with asbestos, and the only way to know for certain is to have it tested.

The situation changes the moment you need to do anything in that attic: adding insulation, running new wiring or ductwork, installing a bathroom fan, or any renovation that touches the attic space. At that point, Health Canada's advice is direct: do not attempt to remove vermiculite yourself, and hire professionals trained to handle asbestos. Alberta Environment's guidance adds that friable asbestos-containing materials should not be disturbed and that handling should be restricted to qualified personnel.

Before any contractor begins removal work, Alberta OHS Code section 36 requires the employer to file a notification with a Director at least 72 hours before starting activities that may release fibres. There is no minimum quantity that triggers this. Every worker entering the restricted area must hold a current government-approved Alberta asbestos worker card. Removal costs for a vermiculite attic run from \$5,000 to \$25,000 depending on the size of the attic, the depth of the material, how accessible the space is, and whether re-insulation is included in the scope.

If you want to know what you actually have before making any decision, a bulk sample sent to a lab for PLM (polarized light microscopy) analysis costs \$65 to \$145 per sample. Published lab packages covering several samples bring the per-sample cost down. Testing is the only way to confirm whether asbestos is present and at what level.

Before you hire anyone, ask the contractor to show you the workers' asbestos cards, confirm they will file the 72-hour OHS notification before starting, and ask whether clearance air testing after the work is done will be carried out by an independent consultant rather than the abatement crew itself.

If the vermiculite has already been disturbed, stop what you are doing right now, leave the attic, keep everyone including pets out of the space, close the hatch, and do not sweep or vacuum any debris until the material has been tested and you have guidance on next steps.

When you are ready for quotes, the form on this page goes to abatement contractors in the Calgary Construction Network directory.

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.