This fact sheet provides information about asbestos risk and management

Do not enter a fire-affected property until it has been assessed as safe. There may be asbestos present or dangerous structures that could collapse and cause serious injury. As part of the recovery process, occupiers will be given the opportunity to enter their sites under supervision prior to demolition and clean-up of the sites.

Public Works Authority Building Impact Assessments to confirm destroyed and damaged building are now complete across the Bega Valley Shire. Please make sure you are registered for clean-up with Service NSW so that you can be contacted as part of the next steps for the clean-up program.

What do I need to do to get the clean-up process started?

Asbestos clean-up and removal is part of the process being managed by the NSW Government which is coordinating the clean-up of NSW residences and eligible businesses impacted by the NSW bushfires. This includes both insured and uninsured properties. Delivering these services means impacted property owners will not have to pay for debris, including potentially hazardous materials, to be removed and disposed of.

It’s very important to register for clean-up with Service NSW online: www.service.nsw.gov.au/transaction/nsw-bushfire-clean-register-now or call 13 77 88.

When you register, the managing clean-up contractor, Laing O’Rourke, will receive the information they need to contact you to begin discussing and planning the scope of works for your individual situation. If you have concerns about the outcome of that scoping discussion you can contact the Public Works Authority who will work through those issues with you. The key is to understand before those discussions, what you believe is reasonable to be included in the clean-up and be ready to discuss this with Laing O’Rourke when they make contact.

What is the process for identifying asbestos?

Public Works Authority’s Building Impact Assessment team has completed asbestos evaluations and stabilisation in the region. If you would like to speak to someone about the asbestos assessment process for your property, first please register for clean-up with Service NSW online: www.service.nsw.gov.au/transaction/nsw-bushfire-clean-register-now or call them on 13 77 88.

Public Works Authority has been to my house and the possibility of asbestos was identified in the burnt remains. What can I expect next?

If initial testing identifies the potential for the presence of asbestos, the next step is for a second inspection to be conducted to gather more information, including the collection of lab samples. If testing confirms asbestos is present, the affected debris will be sprayed with a glue substance to stabilise it. In the meantime, if you have concerns about wind creating issues, you should wear a P2 mask and dampen the asbestos affected material with water. An initial assessment identifies hazards for property owners to be aware, with a Hazard Identification Notice displayed at assessed properties.

Signs are displayed on properties that have been inspected to provide advice for owners. You can find out the status of your property by calling Service NSW on 1800 885 539.

NSW Health: returning home safely after a bushfire (read before returning)
It’s definitely asbestos. What now with clean-up?

Make sure you have registered your details with Service NSW online: www.service.nsw.gov.au/transaction/nsw-bushfire-clean-register-now or by calling 13 77 88.

Asbestos removal is conducted under very strict protocols and can only be done by a licensed contractor. Once a decision has been made about locations for the disposal of asbestos-contaminated waste in the Shire, your demolition contractor, appointed by Laing O’Rourke, will transport the asbestos to an approved Council waste facility. There will be no charge to dispose of your waste.

Once the site has been cleaned by either Laing O’Rourke, your insurer’s contractor or your self-appointed contractor, you will need to ask for the Occupational Hygienist’s Clearance Certificate.

My property is fire-affected but does not contain asbestos. What I do?

Register with Service NSW online: www.service.nsw.gov.au/transaction/nsw-bushfire-clean-register-now or call 13 77 88. You will be able to proceed with the NSW Government’s bushfire clean up support program.

My neighbour’s property is fire-affected and contains asbestos. Do I need to worry about this?

The Public Works Building Impact Assessment team is tracking and chasing friable asbestos beyond the immediate surrounds of damaged buildings. They will test and provide you and your neighbours with a certificate.

Register with Service NSW online: www.service.nsw.gov.au/transaction/nsw-bushfire-clean-register-now or by calling 13 77 88 if you are concerned about your neighbour’s property so we can track you through the process of checking this.

What waste facilities in the Shire accept asbestos?

At this stage building demolition material cannot be accepted at any of our waste facilities due to the risks of asbestos contaminated material. We are working with the NSW Government and relevant agencies to address and manage this risk and we will let you know when we can accept this type of material. Visit Clean-up and rebuilding process for more information.

What effect does fire have on asbestos?

During a fire, the amount of asbestos fibres released into the air is relatively low. After a fire, pieces of asbestos cement materials can become brittle and may release fibres if they are disturbed while cleaning up.

I’m concerned that the rain we’ve had will limit the effectiveness of the glue stabiliser. What will happen?

Yes, the stabiliser will be less effective, however, while the ruins are still wet there is little risk. Public Works contractors are committed to the reapplication of the glue to affected premises within 100m of occupied premises once the rain stops.

If dry conditions return and the glue is yet to be reapplied in a certain area, a precaution is to wear a P2 face mask if the breeze is coming towards your location. If inside keep the windows closed.

If you have questions or concerns please contact the Recovery Centre on (02) 6499 2345. We’re here to help.