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Flood Victims Warned of Asbestos Risks Caused by Torrential Rains and Floods

Visit asbestosawareness.com.au – it's not worth the risk!

Following the most recent natural disaster across NSW east where heavy rains and floods hammered vast regions of NSW, homeowners, businesses, commercial and rural property owners are being warned to ensure they are aware that asbestos might be present in damaged properties and how to manage it.

Countless numbers of homes, businesses and properties have been damaged leaving property owners thousands homeless and waiting for floodwaters to subside before commencing the heartbreaking task of cleaning up or rebuilding after homes and businesses have been damaged.

Cherie Barber, Ambassador for the National Asbestos Awareness campaign is urging those impacted to be wary of potential dangers posed by damaged asbestos-containing materials found in homes, buildings, structures and flood debris that may have washed onto their properties.

"When homes and other buildings containing asbestos are damaged or destroyed during floods, wind and storms, asbestos-containing materials can become eroded, disturbed, broken or friable causing a health risk to homeowners, property owners, property managers and the community if these materials aren't managed correctly and disposed of safely," Ms Barber said.

"Before commencing the clean-up, to protect themselves, their families and communities; property owners must visit www.asbestosawareness.com.au to learn how to identify and manage asbestos safely.

"They should also contact their local Council or Emergency Services for important information about asbestos, and if asbestos needs to be removed, people should only use professional licenced asbestos removalists because it's not worth the risk," she said.

Asbestos was used in the manufacture of more than 3000 building and decorator products that can still be found in any brick, weatherboard, clad or fibro home built or renovated prior to 1990. It was used everywhere and may be in many forms including flat or corrugated sheets (fibro) used for walls, ceilings, roofing or in products such as pipes, electrical conduit, eaves, wall and floor tiles and other structures including garages and garden sheds.

In many coastal regions hit hard by the current flood disaster, often original 'weekenders or shacks' were constructed from flat and corrugated (fibro) sheeting including external and internal walls and ceilings, while in rural and regional areas, homes; fences, storage sheds, chook sheds, out houses and stock sheds may have been constructed from asbestos-containing materials.

Asbestos was also commonly used in the construction of commercial and non-residential properties such as shops or public buildings prior to December 2003.

"It's important that property owners and volunteers do not walk on corrugated asbestos roofs or enter any buildings until authorised to do so by Council or Emergency Services," Ms Barber said.

"Erosion, heavy rains, winds and tree branches may have caused additional damage to already aged asbestos roofs as well as the walls of the structure. While homes, commercial properties and other structures (sheds, garages and stock sheds etc.) may be structurally unsound and vulnerable to collapse.

"Other potential hazards property owners need to avoid include damaged asbestos-containing materials, sharp edges, protruding nails and broken materials including glass and timber that could be found in building rubble, damaged structures and flood debris," said Ms Barber.

“When it comes to managing asbestos, the first rule is, if you think a building material, product or debris may contain asbestos, treat it as if it is asbestos and take all the necessary precautions in line with regulations,” She said.

“When storms and floods hit, whole buildings and even stockpiled asbestos-containing materials (particularly flat or corrugated sheeting commonly known as fibro) can be picked up by floodwaters and moved from one location to another.

“So, even if your home was built after 1990, it is possible that during floods, miscellaneous debris including asbestos-containing materials from elsewhere can end up on your property and pose a risk.

“Should you find displaced structures and debris containing asbestos on your property, it’s vital that these materials are managed safely and in line with regulations,” Ms Barber said.

Homeowners, commercial and rural property owners and managers should visit www.asbestosawareness.com.au for information on how to identify asbestos-containing building materials and decorator products and find out what they need to know to manage asbestos safely following storms and floods.

-ENDS-

MORE INFORMATION ON SAFE ASBESTOS MANAGEMENT FOLLOWING FLOODS & STORMS

Asbestos & Floods: <https://asbestosawareness.com.au/natural-disasters/floods/>

Asbestos products database: <https://asbestosawareness.com.au/asbestos-products-database/>

asbestosawareness.com.au is Australia’s leading, most comprehensive, trusted asbestos information source. Since launching in 2011, the website has had over 2.5 million pageviews, more than 1 million sessions while its unique resources (fact sheets, guides etc.) have been downloaded over 500,000 times.

HI-RES IMAGES: <https://asbestosawareness.box.com/v/flood-damage>

CSA: <https://asbestosawareness.box.com/v/Asbestos-Awareness-Radio-CSA>

INTERVIEW REQUESTS:

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HASHTAGS

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SPOKESPERSON

Cherie Barber – Asbestos Awareness Ambassador

Cherie Barber is widely known as Australia’s Renovation Queen™ and in March 2024 was named the third Most Trusted celebrity according to the Australian Talent Index’s Top Talent Report. Cherie is a regular TV renovator, highly sought-after public speaker, author and award-winning businesswoman with her renovating for profit career spanning more than 30 years. Cherie lost her grandfather to asbestos-related disease and has been a dedicated Ambassador for the National Asbestos Awareness campaign to educate homeowners and DIYers on how to renovate homes with asbestos safely since 2013.

ABOUT

The Asbestos Education Committee (AEC) initiated **asbestosawareness.com.au** in NSW in 2011, later expanding it into the National Asbestos Awareness Campaign. Collaborating closely with stakeholders such as local and state governments, non-profits, research organisations, and businesses; **asbestosawareness.com.au** emerged as the premier educational platform for asbestos awareness in Australia. When government funding ceased in 2018, Advocacy Australia, a registered charity, was established in 2020 to ensure the continuity of asbestos education and revived the Asbestos Education Committee (AEC). Comprised of industry leaders and stakeholders, the AEC is dedicated to minimizing exposure to hazardous asbestos fibres and maximising education and awareness to help save lives.