

# Hidden Danger - Hazardous Materials in Your Flood-Damaged Building

July 11, 2013



## There may be hidden dangers in your flood-damaged building

Before you start your renovation or demolition, you need to know about hazardous materials. They can pose a danger to workers, contractors and you. Health and safety is important to everyone.

### Hazardous materials can include chemical substances such as:

- building materials containing asbestos
- non-asbestos insulation materials such as fibre glass and refractory ceramic fibre
- lead paints and mercury (fluorescent lights, switches, gauges), batteries and fuels
- PCBs (liquid-cooled equipment, light ballasts, paints, electrical insulating materials)
- oils, lubricants, paints, glues, solvents and thinners
- cooling system chemicals such as Freon and compressed gases

**Hazardous materials also include biological substances such as mould and bacteria from human and/or animal wastes.**

### Before work begins

- **do not remove load-bearing walls** – consult with a structural engineer if required.
- assess hazards you, volunteers and contractors may encounter (see below for assessment worksheet)
- wear appropriate protective equipment, including: footwear, safety glasses, gloves and respiratory masks.
- properly dispose of hazardous waste
- **do not remove** materials containing asbestos yourself
- where possible, workers, volunteers and contractors should be trained to deal with hazards.
- **do not conduct work** you are not qualified to do – electrical, plumbing, roofing, asbestos abatement

### If there are materials containing asbestos in a flood-damaged building, a contractor must:

- remove or enclose the material in the renovation area;
- notify Occupational Health and Safety before the materials are removed, enclosed or encapsulated; and
- ensure workers involved in the removal, enclosure or encapsulation of the material have appropriate training specific to these activities.

**\*Many buildings built prior to 1990 contain asbestos. If you suspect this applies to your flood-damaged building contact an asbestos abatement and removal company.**

### The Alberta Building Code

The Alberta Building Code is administered by Alberta Municipal Affairs. It requires building owners to obtain a building permit before altering or demolishing a structure. To obtain a permit, contact your local municipality.

### Occupational Health and Safety

Alberta Human Services administers the health and safety rules for work sites through the Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Act, Regulation and Code.

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## Hazard Assessment Worksheet for Flood-Damaged Buildings

Is the building structurally safe to enter? Yes/No/Unsure

*If no or unsure: Do not enter and have a structural engineer assess.*

Is there standing water in the building? Yes/No

*If yes: Pump out water before conducting hazard assessment.*

Is there an emergency response plan to address rescue of workers or to deal with incidents? Yes/No

Type of Hazard	Present (Y/N)	Control
Sewage contamination		
Mould		
Damaged chemical containers		
Damaged storage tanks		
Chemical odours		
Asbestos in building materials		
Lead paint		
Mercury in light fixtures, switches, gauges		
Diesel exhaust		
Other chemical hazards(list)		
Electrical hazards		
Slips, trips and falls		
Falls from heights		
Fire and explosion (e.g. damaged natural gas lines, leaks from fuel tanks)		
Heat stress		
Confined or restricted spaces		
Ladders		
Falling hazards (e.g. openings in floors, damaged stairs)		
Lifting of heavy items		
Working alone		
Insufficient lighting		
Sharp edges		
Other physical hazards(list)		

### Contact Us

Human Services – Occupational Health and Safety

<http://humanservices.alberta.ca/documents/gs009-Tips-On-Selecting-OHS-Consultant.pdf>

Toll-free: 1-866-415-8690

Municipal Affairs – Building Permits

[http://www.municipalaffairs.alberta.ca/cp\\_permit\\_information.cfm](http://www.municipalaffairs.alberta.ca/cp_permit_information.cfm)

Toll-free: 1-866-421-6929

Environment and Sustainable Resource Development – Hazardous Waste

<http://www.environment.alberta.ca/documents/Hazardous-Waste-and-Hazardous-Recyclables.pdf>

Toll-free: 310-3773