OTTAWA ABATEMENT

# Vermiculite Insulation

Vermiculite in Ottawa attics and walls: Health Canada's advice, testing, leaving it sealed versus removing it, and what removal involves

4 Expert Answers from Abatement IQ

ottawaabatement.com/construction-brain

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Q1

## Vermiculite spilled from my Ottawa ceiling during a reno, what now?

Stop the renovation work and don't disturb the spilled material further. Have it tested by a professional before any work resumes, because Health Canada advises hiring a professional to test before renovating and a qualified asbestos removal specialist if asbestos is found, and the federal vermiculite page says some brands of vermiculite insulation may contain tremolite asbestos.

### What to do with the spill right now

The federal vermiculite page on canada.ca says there is currently no evidence of risk to your health if vermiculite insulation is sealed behind wallboards and floorboards, isolated in an attic, or otherwise kept from exposure to the interior environment. A spill means the material is no longer sealed or isolated. Health Canada's advice for vermiculite is: don't disturb it or attempt to remove it yourself. That advice applies here. A lab test will tell you what your specific material contains.

Once you have a test result showing asbestos content at 0.5 per cent or more by dry weight (the threshold in O. Reg. 278/05, section 3(4)), the spilled material is asbestos-containing material under Ontario's regulation, and Health Canada advises a qualified asbestos removal specialist.

The Type the contractor assigns depends on whether the material is friable and how much of it is disturbed, assessed on site. Under O. Reg. 278/05, removal of more than one square metre of friable asbestos-containing material is a Type 3 operation. Type 3 requires the employer to notify, orally and in writing, an inspector at the nearest Ministry of Labour office before work begins. Every worker must have completed the Asbestos Abatement Worker Training Program and every supervisor the Asbestos Abatement Supervisor Training Program, both approved by the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development. After the work, clearance air testing is required under section 18 of the regulation. If the spill is smaller, the Type may be lower, but the contractor decides that on site, not from a description.

For the remaining vermiculite in the ceiling, Health Canada says: don't use the attic for storage, keep children out of the attic, apply caulking to seal openings or gaps around the attic hatch, baseboards, light fixtures, outlets, and window and door frames, and hire professionals trained to handle asbestos if you plan to renovate.

Published Ontario contractor prices, read in September 2026, put vermiculite attic removal at $5,000 to $25,000 per attic. General asbestos removal runs $8 to $15 per square foot. An air clearance test after abatement runs about $300 to $800. Under Ontario Regulation 347, asbestos waste must go to a disposal site whose operator has agreed to accept it and has been advised of the anticipated arrival time; it cannot go out with regular garbage.

Ask the contractor to confirm the Type in writing, name the disposal site, and show that workers have completed the required training. You can also search the contractor's WSIB clearance online before signing.

The most useful first call is to the contractor, because they can assess the spill in person, assign the correct Type, and tell you whether a Ministry of Labour inspector notice is required before they can start.

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Q2

## Is vermiculite removal a Type 3 job in Ontario?

The Type depends on what the contractor finds on site, not on the material itself. Vermiculite insulation may contain asbestos, but whether a removal falls under Type 1, Type 2 or Type 3 is decided by two things: whether the material is friable, and how much of it is disturbed.

Under O. Reg. 278/05, the thresholds work like this. If the friable asbestos-containing material disturbed is one square metre or less, the work is Type 2. If it is more than one square metre of friable material, the work is Type 3. The contractor assesses friability on site. Section 12(5) says work on ceiling tiles, drywall or friable asbestos-containing material is classified according to the total area on which work is done consecutively in a room or enclosed area, even if the work is divided into smaller jobs.

If more than one square metre of friable asbestos-containing material is disturbed, the job is Type 3. Type 3 carries specific legal requirements. Before work starts, the constructor or employer must notify, orally and in writing, an inspector at the nearest Ministry of Labour office. Every worker must have completed the Asbestos Abatement Worker Training Program approved by the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development, and every supervisor the Asbestos Abatement Supervisor Training Program, before work begins. After the work, clearance air testing under section 18 of the regulation must be conducted by a competent worker once the enclosure is dry. The area passes using the PCM method only if every air sample does not exceed 0.01 fibres per cubic centimetre, with at least 2,400 litres drawn per filter. Results must be posted within 24 hours, and the owner keeps a copy for at least one year.

Health Canada advises that you should not attempt to remove vermiculite yourself, and that you should hire professionals trained to handle asbestos if you plan to renovate. Waste leaving the site must comply with Ontario Regulation 347: it goes only to a disposal site whose operator has agreed to accept it and has been advised of its arrival time, packed in a sealed rigid impermeable container with the required labelling. Ask the contractor which disposal site has agreed to take the load before work starts.

Published Ontario contractor prices for vermiculite attic removal run from $5,000 to $25,000 per attic, based on published prices read in September 2026. A clearance air test after the work runs roughly $300 to $800. You can check whether a contractor has a current WSIB clearance through the WSIB online search.

Before you commit to a contract, ask the contractor to confirm the Type in writing, show that workers and the supervisor have completed the required training programs, and tell you when the Ministry of Labour inspector notice will be filed and what the clearance air test results will look like once the enclosure is dry.

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Q3

## Can vermiculite dust get into my Ottawa living space?

Health Canada's advice treats it as a real possibility: vermiculite-based insulation may contain asbestos, and if you have it, Health Canada says to seal the openings between it and your living space and not to disturb it.

The federal vermiculite page on canada.ca notes 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 from exposure to the interior environment. The key word is sealed. Health Canada advises applying caulking to seal openings or gaps around the attic hatch, baseboards, light fixtures, outlets, and window and door frames.

### What changes the risk

The condition of the material matters. Vermiculite-based insulation may contain asbestos, and a lab test tells you what yours contains. If it is intact and undisturbed, the federal page says there is currently no evidence of risk. Health Canada is direct: don't disturb it or attempt to remove it yourself, don't use the attic for storage, and keep children out of the attic.

If you are planning renovation work in that part of the house, Health Canada advises hiring professionals trained to handle asbestos.

If removal becomes necessary, the Type of work under O. Reg. 278/05 depends on whether the material is friable and how much of it is disturbed, which the contractor assesses on site. That classification drives the legal requirements: a Type 3 job, for example, requires the employer to notify a Ministry of Labour inspector before work starts and requires workers to have completed the Asbestos Abatement Worker Training Program approved by the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development. Published Ontario contractor prices read in September 2026 put vermiculite attic removal at roughly $5,000 to $25,000 per attic.

For disposal, Ontario Regulation 347 requires that asbestos waste leave the site only after the receiving disposal facility has agreed to accept it and has been told when to expect it. Ask the contractor which facility has agreed to take the load before any work begins.

Before you commit to a contractor for this job, ask them to give you the Type classification in writing, confirm whether a Ministry of Labour inspector notice is required and show you that it has been filed, and tell you what the clearance air test results will look like and how you will receive them.

Q4

## Does vermiculite have to be removed before selling an Ottawa house?

No, not under any Ontario law or City of Ottawa rule we found: nothing requires vermiculite to be removed before a house sale. Whether to remove it, disclose it or leave it in place is a practical and legal question about the sale, not an abatement requirement.

### What the federal guidance says

Health Canada advises that vermiculite-based insulation may contain asbestos, and the federal vermiculite page on canada.ca says there is currently no evidence of risk to your health if it is sealed behind wallboards and floorboards, isolated in an attic, or otherwise kept from exposure to the interior environment. So undisturbed vermiculite in a sealed attic is not automatically a removal job. Health Canada's advice is specific: don't use the attic for storage, keep children out of it, don't disturb the material or attempt to remove it yourself, and apply caulking to seal openings or gaps around the attic hatch, baseboards, light fixtures, outlets, and window and door frames.

If you do plan to renovate in a way that would disturb the vermiculite, Health Canada says to hire professionals trained to handle asbestos. Removal falls under O. Reg. 278/05, Ontario's asbestos regulation. Which Type of operation applies depends on how much friable material is disturbed and the method used, both of which the contractor assesses on site. Vermiculite attic removal is a larger job: published Ontario contractor prices, read in September 2026, run roughly $5,000 to $25,000 per attic.

Disclosure is a real estate question, not an abatement question. A lab test tells you what your vermiculite actually contains, since Health Canada says it may contain asbestos. A pre-renovation inspection with asbestos testing runs roughly $250 to $1,300 depending on the size of the building and the number of samples, based on published Ontario contractor prices read in September 2026. Having a test result in hand gives you a factual answer to pass on, whatever you decide to do with it. Ask your real estate lawyer about your disclosure obligations for the sale itself.

If the vermiculite has already been disturbed during a renovation or while clearing the attic, stop the work, don't disturb it further, and have it tested by a professional. Local abatement contractors listed in the Ottawa Construction Network directory can be reached through the request form on this page.

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**Disclaimer:** This guide is provided for informational purposes only by Ottawa Abatement. It does not constitute professional advice. Always consult qualified contractors and your local building authority (the City of Ottawa or your own municipality) before starting any asbestos, mould or lead paint project. Asbestos work in Ontario is governed by O. Reg. 278/05. Information is current as of November 15, 2026 and may change. Visit **ottawaabatement.com** for the latest answers.