



FACT SHEET

HOW TO SAFELY INSTALL CEILING INSULATION

THE HAZARDS

When installing ceiling insulation, you should control the health and safety risks associated with:

- insulation containing synthetic mineral fibres (SMFs) – eg rockwool or glasswool – or other fibres or dust that can irritate the skin, eyes and upper respiratory tract
- hazardous substances – eg asbestos, pesticides, chemicals or lead
- untreated or damp insulation – which can house vermin or insects
- non-fire-retardant insulation
- accessing and traversing the roof cavity
- working at heights
- tripping over debris, material and tools
- inadequate lighting
- manual handling
- electrical wiring (paying particular attention to wiring installed prior to 1986), and electrical fittings – which can cause fire and shock
- pests within the roof cavity – eg spiders.

PRIOR TO INSTALLATION

If you're an employer, head contractor or self-employed worker, you must:

- follow the risk management process – ie identify all the hazards, assess their risks and control them
- consult with anyone involved in the work
- develop safe work procedures for removing and installing insulation, using information from the risk management process, relevant material safety data sheets (MSDS) and Australian Standard 3999
- ensure that any exposure to SMF products will meet the standards outlined in the *National Code of Practice for the Safe Use of Synthetic Mineral Fibres*
- provide appropriate information and training to anyone involved in the work
- provide appropriate tools and personal protective equipment (PPE) – it's preferable to use manual tools, and any power tools should be fitted with effective dust collection, to capture fibres and dust, and be connected through a residual current device (RCD) power outlet
- ensure that a system is in place to prevent falls
- ensure there are adequate facilities available for washing and first aid – obtain approval to use washing facilities.

If you are an installer, before you enter the roof cavity to start the installation:

- ensure that you know:
 - how to safely access the roof cavity
 - how to eliminate or (if this is not possible) control any associated risks
 - where and how to store the insulation
 - what to do in an emergency
 - if you have any relevant allergies
- learn the safe work procedures for removing and installing insulation
- tell others who are not involved in the work to keep away from the stored insulation and from any areas immediately below where you will be working
- check that your tools and PPE are adequate and maintained
- do a pre-work risk assessment of the roof cavity and advise the building owner of any identified risks that you cannot eliminate or control. Where you identify electrical hazards, a qualified electrical contractor should be engaged to eliminate or control the risks.

Only start work once all the above is complete, and you are satisfied that the system of work and working environment is safe and without risk to health.

DURING INSTALLATION

While installing the insulation:

- follow the safe work procedures for removing and installing insulation
- keep in constant contact with someone
- wear appropriate, maintained and correctly-fitted PPE, including:
 - a half-face (class P1 or P2) disposable dust respirator, in accordance with Australian/New Zealand Standard 1715
 - a head-covering and goggles, to avoid eye irritation
 - long-sleeved, loose-fitting clothing and gloves, to minimise skin contact
 - appropriate footwear
- handle the insulation with care and minimise the release of fibres or dust
- step on roof beams – not the ceiling
- be aware of any electrical cables while trimming or cutting
- do not place material over down lights – as it could create a heat build-up and consequent fire risk – and maintain at least 200 mm clearance around them, in accordance with Australian/New Zealand *Wiring rules*
- regularly keep your work areas clean and clear of fibres and dust, by using an industrial vacuum cleaner fitted with high-efficiency particulate filters, and place waste in plastic bags capable of containing dust.

Immediately after you have installed the insulation:

- appropriately dispose of debris and waste
- wash your hands, face, neck and hair, with soap and water.

WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?

- Call WorkCover on **13 10 50**.
- Visit www.workcover.nsw.gov.au or call our publications hotline 1300 799 003 for:
 - the NSW *Code of practice for the safe use of synthetic mineral fibres*
 - *Guidance note for ceiling dusts containing lead*.
- Visit www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au to download the *National code of practice for the safe use of synthetic mineral fibres*.
- Visit www.nabers.com.au to download the Department of Environment and Climate Change's *Insulating your home*.
- Visit www.saiglobal.com/shop to purchase a copy of:
 - Australian/New Zealand Standard 1715 – 2009: *Selection, use and maintenance of respiratory protective equipment*
 - Australian/New Zealand Standard 3000 – 2007: *Wiring rules*
 - Australian Standard 3999 – 1992: *Thermal insulation of dwellings – Bulk insulation – Installation requirements*.

Government rebate program

To install ceiling insulation under the Australian Government's Home Insulation Program (HIP) businesses must be on the program's *Installer provider register*. To register, businesses must meet minimum competency standards, hold specified insurance cover, have an ABN and agree to a number of terms and conditions.

As part of the competency standards, each person employed or subcontracted by the installer to install ceiling insulation will be required to meet a minimum level of competency.

Competency standards are available at the Energy Efficient Homes Package website or by calling 1800 808 571.

Visit www.environment.gov.au/energyefficiency to download:

- program guidelines
- installer information, including:
 - installer terms and conditions of registration
 - minimum competency requirements.

Disclaimer

This publication may contain occupational health and safety and workers compensation information. It may include some of your obligations under the various legislations that WorkCover NSW administers. To ensure you comply with your legal obligations you must refer to the appropriate legislation.

Information on the latest laws can be checked by visiting the NSW legislation website (www.legislation.nsw.gov.au) or by contacting the free hotline service on 02 9321 3333.

This publication does not represent a comprehensive statement of the law as it applies to particular problems or to individuals or as a substitute for legal advice. You should seek independent legal advice if you need assistance on the application of the law to your situation.

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