



GUIDE DISMANTLING · 10 MIN READ

What does industrial dismantling cost?

Cost factors in industrial dismantling: hazardous-substance remediation, disposal, demolition and potential savings. Realistic cost ranges for planning purposes.

Cost factors in industrial dismantling

The cost of an industrial dismantling project cannot be quantified in general terms — it depends on numerous factors whose combination makes every project unique. A qualified cost assessment presupposes a survey on site. The main cost drivers are the size and type of the building, hazardous substance contamination, accessibility, regional disposal prices and time pressure.

- Building type and construction: steel structures are less expensive to dismantle than solid construction, and deep foundations increase costs considerably
- Hazardous substance contamination: asbestos, MMMF (man-made mineral fibres), PAHs or contaminated soils can multiply the costs
- Building volume and enclosed space: determines the demolition and disposal quantities
- Site factors: inner-city location, confined conditions, sensitive neighbours
- Time pressure: accelerated dismantling methods require more personnel and equipment
- Market situation: disposal prices and scrap revenues are subject to fluctuation

Note: Cost assessment only after a site survey — Reputable dismantling contractors do not quote lump-sum prices without having inspected the site and reviewed a hazardous substance survey. Quotations made without knowledge of the site inevitably contain high risk premiums, or they carry the risk of substantial variation claims.

Typical cost ranges

The following cost ranges provide guidance for budget planning. They are based on experience gained from industrial dismantling projects in Germany and are to be understood as bandwidths — not as binding prices. Every project must be costed individually.

- Straightforward demolition of a hall (steel structure, low in hazardous substances): lower cost range, with scrap revenues offsetting part of the cost
- Industrial buildings with hazardous substance contamination: medium to upper cost range, depending on the type and extent of the contamination
- Complex industrial plants (chemical plants, power stations): upper cost range, requiring special equipment and qualified personnel
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Soil remediation: highly variable costs, depending on the depth and type of contamination and, where applicable, groundwater remediation

- Planning and site management: typically 8 to 12 per cent of the net construction costs

Note: Allow for a budget reserve — On industrial dismantling projects, always allow for a budget reserve of 15 to 20 per cent. Unforeseen hazardous substance contamination, structural surprises or contamination in the subsoil occur more frequently than expected — managing variations is the rule, not the exception.

The cost of hazardous-substance remediation

Hazardous-substance remediation is regularly the largest single cost block on dismantling projects involving buildings from the 1950s to the 1990s. The costs depend on the type of hazardous substance, the quantity, the accessibility and the protective measures required. Asbestos remediation, for example, calls for contained dirty areas, negative-pressure containment and clearance measurements — which drives the cost per square metre well above that of plain removal.

- Asbestos remediation: depends on the type of bonding (firmly bound or weakly bound), the accessibility and the quantity
- MMMF remediation (old mineral wool): costs lower than for asbestos, but likewise entailing protective measures
- PAH-containing materials (tar felt, parquet adhesive): dismantling and disposal as hazardous waste
- PCB-contaminated joint sealants and coatings: elaborate decontamination, disposal as special waste
- Heavy metals in soils and building components: analysis, selective dismantling, special disposal routes

Note: The hazardous substance survey as the basis for costing — The hazardous substance survey is the most important basis for costing. Invest in a comprehensive survey with a sufficient density of samples. Follow-up investigations made necessary by too few samples are more expensive than a thorough initial survey.

Disposal costs and material revenues

Disposal costs vary considerably according to the type of material, the degree of contamination and the region. Mineral waste (concrete, masonry) can be processed into recycled material where contamination is low — the costs are then significantly lower than for landfill disposal. Hazardous waste requires special disposal routes, which are correspondingly more expensive.

- Mineral waste (clean): processing into recycled material, low cost or cost-neutral
- Mineral waste (contaminated): disposal at a class I to class III landfill, depending on the degree of contamination
- Hazardous waste (asbestos, MMMF): special disposal routes, hazardous waste landfill or thermal treatment
- Steel scrap: revenues depending on market conditions and quality — currently a relevant offset against costs
- Non-ferrous metals (copper, aluminium): higher revenues than steel, requiring separation by grade
- Timber, plastics, mixed waste: disposal costs depending on the degree of contamination and on sorting

Note: Manage material revenues actively — On large industrial dismantling projects, steel scrap and non-ferrous metal revenues can reach a six-figure sum. Agree contractually how the revenues are to be shared, and have the quantities weighed independently. Transparency over revenues reduces the overall cost of the project.

Potential savings and cost control

Even though industrial dismantling is a complex and cost-intensive undertaking, there are numerous levers for optimising costs. The most important principle: thorough planning and qualified execution are cheaper than variations and extensions to the construction period.

- A qualified site survey: considerably reduces variations and unforeseen costs
- Selective dismantling: higher recovery rates lower disposal costs
- Tendering strategy: performance-based tendering rather than purely price-driven — quality saves money in the long run
- Scheduling: avoiding extensions to the construction period through realistic programming
- Material revenues: active scrap management and marketing of reusable components
- Main contractor model: one point of contact, clear responsibility, fewer interfaces

Note: Fixed-price contract vs. unit-price contract — Where sites have been thoroughly investigated, a fixed-price contract can secure the costs. Where risks are unknown (for example because of an inadequate hazardous substance survey), a unit-price contract with measurement is more transparent. Seek advice on both models and weigh up risk against planning certainty.

Frequently asked questions

Can I claim the cost of industrial dismantling for tax purposes?

Dismantling costs are, in principle, tax-deductible as business expenses. For accounting purposes it must be examined whether dismantling obligations have to be recognised as a provision. Consult your tax adviser on this.

Who bears the costs if the operator becomes insolvent?

In the event of insolvency, the owner of the land is liable as the party responsible by virtue of the condition of the property (Zustandsstörer) for the costs of averting hazards and of soil remediation. The insolvency administrator must include the cost of dismantling in the liabilities of the insolvency estate.

Is public funding available for industrial dismantling?

Some federal states operate funding programmes for the revitalisation of brownfield sites and the remediation of contaminated land. The joint federal/state task for improving the regional economic structure (GRW) can apply to site revitalisation. Check the programmes available in your federal state.

Let us talk about your project

Reply within 24 hours on working days.

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