

Asbestos in the Home - Advice to Householders

What is asbestos?

- Asbestos is a natural mineral made up of many small fibres. There are three main types: blue, brown and white – all can be harmful if dust containing the fibres is breathed in.
- Asbestos has been widely used about the home in building materials and consumer goods. It was particularly used to resist heat and for fire protection. Asbestos in homes is not necessarily dangerous, but some asbestos materials are easily damaged, and can release dust containing fine fibres, which can become airborne.
- Remember: Breathing asbestos dust is dangerous and it can cause a number of diseases, including cancer, often many years after the first exposure to asbestos, so asbestos should always be handled carefully.

How can you identify asbestos products?

- Since 1976 British asbestos manufacturers have put labels on most of their products to show that they contain asbestos, but labels are often removed after purchase.
- The supplier or manufacturer of a building material or appliance may be able to tell you whether it contains asbestos.

Where is asbestos used in homes?

Asbestos cement – 10-15% asbestos

A widely used material consisting of asbestos bonded cement. Flat or corrugated sheet is used for garage and shed roofs and walls. Moulded asbestos cement is used for cold water tanks, external rainwater pipes guttering, decking and roofing tiles, lining under eaves and flue pipes. Asbestos cement may be held in place with screws or bolts.

Asbestos Insulation Board – 25-40% asbestos

A sheet material softer than asbestos cement, it was used for fire protection, heat insulation, ceiling tiles and as building board. Since 1980 all insulating board made in the UK has been asbestos free. Asbestos insulating board may be held in place with screws or nails.

Asbestos lagging – 55-100% asbestos

A variety of types of asbestos materials have been used for insulating pipes and boilers. Asbestos lagging is unlikely to be found in modern houses, but sometimes used in flats or older houses. A preliminary inspection for asbestos should be made before repair or removal of older central heating systems.

Sprayed asbestos – up to 85% asbestos

A soft material, vulnerable to damage, used for protecting structural steelwork and for insulation. It may be found in a small number of steel-framed houses and in the communal areas of flats.

Other asbestos material

Some plastic floor tiles, cushion flooring, roofing felts, textured plasters and paints contain a small percentage of asbestos.

Warm air heating systems and storage heaters

Asbestos insulation blocks, insulating board and asbestos paper have been used in some warm air heating systems. Asbestos insulating board and asbestos cement were sometimes

used to line heater cupboards and ducting. Some electrical storage heaters made before 1976 also contain asbestos.

Domestic equipment.

Simmering pads, oven gloves and fire blankets were sometimes made of asbestos. Ovens, ironing boards and heaters may have asbestos components.

What should you do about asbestos building materials?

Check that the materials are in good condition and not worn or damaged. Look for signs of dust released by the materials.

- Asbestos materials in good condition may be left in place. You can paint them to prevent any dust from escaping. Use emulsion paint for insulation board. But use alkali resistant primer or coating for asbestos cement. **Do not rub down asbestos material before painting.**
- If asbestos material is damaged or releasing dust it should be removed.

DO NOT DISTURB ASBESTOS MATERIALS UNLESS YOU HAVE TO.

Small amounts of asbestos-cement can be removed provided it does not have to be broken and the following precautions are taken.

- Keep other people away for the work area
- Wet material (provided there is no contact with electricity) with water containing a little washing-up liquid
- Remove whole sheets or components, do not break them up
- Clean up any dust left behind with a damp cloth (not a vacuum cleaner) and seal it in a plastic bag.
- Wash after completing the work
- You may wish to employ a specialist asbestos contractor to remove large quantities of asbestos cement. **Work on sprayed asbestos or lagging, must always be carried-out by a licensed asbestos removal contractor.**

IF FIRE PROTECTION IS REMOVED REPLACE IT IMMEDIATELY WITH A SUITABLE ALTERNATIVE.

- **Do not drill, saw or sand asbestos material.**

Other Materials

- Do not rub down textured plasters containing asbestos.
- Floor coverings containing asbestos should be removed carefully and any residue wetted before removal.
- Waste floor material and roofing felt should never be burned.

What should you do about asbestos in domestic equipment and appliances?

- Oven gloves, simmering pads, old style ironing boards and similar small items should be disposed of safely as soon as they start to show signs of wear.
- Your local gas or electricity supplier may be able to give you advice on whether a particular warm air heating system or storage heater contains asbestos insulation, and what to do about it.

- No attempt should be made to dismantle gas or electrical appliances – this is a job for specialists. If an appliance is nearing the end of its useful life it may be easier and more economical to replace it completely

What should you do with asbestos waste?

To dispose of small quantities of dusty or loose asbestos waste, damp it down to stop dust escaping, and then seal it in a strong plastic bag marked 'ASBESTOS'

Asbestos cement sheets should not be broken up and need to be sealed in heavy-duty polythene sheets or bags that are double wrapped.

The Waste Disposal site on the London Road will take your domestic asbestos waste. You will need to make an appointment by calling 0500 834 333 or online on our website.

Only the following types of asbestos waste will be accepted:

- Corrugated / flat roofing sheets (maximum 6 sheets)
- Roofing tiles / slates (maximum 3 bags)
- Guttering / down pipes (maximum 3 bags)
- Bath / ceiling / ironing board panels (maximum 6 sheets)
- Storage heaters containing asbestos (maximum 3)

The asbestos container is able to accommodate sheets up to a maximum of 2 x 1 metres (approx. 6 x 3 ft).

Any other type of asbestos must be disposed of privately using a licensed asbestos waste contractor.

All asbestos should be in manageable sizes, i.e. capable of being lifted into a skip by one person.

Where can you get further advice?

- The manufacturer, installer or retailer of equipment may be able to advise whether it contains asbestos, and recommend remedial measures.
- Health and Safety Executive website www.hse.gov.uk

Food and safety team, Regulatory Services

Email: ehcommercial@coventry.gov.uk

Tel: 08085 834333

Customer Service Centre

Broadgate

Coventry

CV1 1FS