

Dealing with
Asbestos

asbestos



Management of Asbestos containing materials

Many building materials may contain asbestos fibres, often this does not mean that they pose any danger if they are not disturbed. It is preferable to remove some types of asbestos due to their location, but in the majority of cases this is not necessary.

Due to a change in legislation on 21st May 2004 all owners of commercial property have to notify occupiers of the location of any asbestos containing materials used in the construction of the property.

Stroud District Council has in conjunction with the new legislation decided to notify tenants of its dwellings, the location of any asbestos containing materials used in the construction of the property.

This information leaflet has been compiled in consultation with your elected tenant representatives.



Introduction

This information addresses concerns and questions about asbestos in homes. It explains what it is, where it is found, why it might be a problem and how to deal with it.

Asbestos fibres are strong and resistant to heat and chemicals. This has led to their use in a wide range of building materials and products, often as fireproofing.

Properties built since the mid-1980s are very unlikely to contain asbestos in the fabric of the building. Properties built after 1990 are extremely unlikely to contain asbestos anywhere in the building. Asbestos cement has been widely used as a cladding material and can still be found in garages and sheds.

This booklet is available in other languages, in large print and as a recording. Please ask for copies by contacting ...



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Why may asbestos be a problem?

When asbestos materials age or become damaged they can release fibres into the air. These can be breathed deep into the lung where they may stay for a long time, causing possible damage. When very high levels of these fibres are breathed in there is a risk of lung diseases, including cancer.

People who have worked with asbestos for many years as part of their job or have washed the dusty clothing of those who worked with asbestos are most likely to be affected. Workplace regulations now protect such people.

Is everyone exposed to asbestos?

There is a very low level of fibres in the air everywhere because asbestos has been used widely. Exposure to this low level of fibres is unlikely to harm people's health.

Levels of fibres may be higher in buildings containing asbestos materials, especially where the materials are damaged. It is very unlikely that the levels of asbestos fibres found in buildings will be harmful, but if you have damaged asbestos materials in your home you should seek advice on the appropriate action to take.

High, short-term exposures to asbestos fibres can occur during DIY work. For this reason, try not to raise dust when working with materials, which might contain asbestos, and avoid sanding or drilling.

Where is asbestos found?

Building materials containing asbestos were widely used from 1930 to around 1980, particularly from the 1960s onwards. So houses and flats built or refurbished at this time may contain asbestos materials.

Asbestos has also been used in some heat-resistant household products, such as oven gloves and ironing boards. The use of asbestos in these products decreased greatly around the mid-1980s, and since 1993 the use of asbestos in most products has been banned.

It is not always easy to tell whether a product contains asbestos, as modern asbestos-free materials often look similar - remember it is usually older products that contain asbestos. Loft or cavity wall insulation does not contain asbestos.

The types of asbestos materials that may be found in homes are described below:

- **Insulating board**
(Asbestos content 20-45 percent)

Insulating board has been used for fire protection, heat and sound insulation. It is particularly common in 1960s and 1970s system-built housing and is found in materials such as ducts, infill panels, ceiling tiles, wall lining, bath panels and partitions. It is unlikely to be found in buildings constructed after 1982.

- **Asbestos lagging**
(Asbestos content 55-100 percent)

Asbestos lagging has been used for thermal insulation of pipes and boilers. It was widely used in public buildings and system built flats during the 1960s to early 1970s in areas such as boiler houses and heating plants.

Asbestos lagging is very rarely found in homes, especially those constructed after the mid 1970s. The use of asbestos for thermal insulation was banned in 1986.

- **Sprayed coating**
(Asbestos content up to 85 percent)

Sprayed asbestos coatings were used for fire protection of structural steel and are commonly found in system built flats built during the 1960s. The coatings were mainly applied around the core of the building such as service ducts, lift shafts, etc.

Use stopped in 1974 and the spraying of asbestos has been prohibited since 1986. Sprayed asbestos has since been removed from many buildings, or sealed to prevent fibres being released.

- **Asbestos-cement products**
(Asbestos content mainly 10-15 percent, but sometimes up to 40 percent)

Asbestos-cement is the most widely used asbestos material. It is found in many types of building as profiled sheets for roofing and wall-cladding, in flat sheets and partition boards for linings to walls and ceilings, in bath panels, soffit boards, fire surrounds, flue pipes, cold water tanks and as roofing tiles and slates.

It has been commonly used as roofing and cladding for garages and sheds and also in guttering and drainpipes.

Use has declined since 1976. Cement sheeting is now being used instead of asbestos cement sheeting, particularly in roofing and cladding construction.

- **Other building materials and products**

Asbestos has been used in a variety of other building materials, for example in decorative coatings such as textured paints and plasters. These are still widely in place but supply and application has been prohibited since 1988. Plastic floor tiles, Linoleum flooring and roofing felts can also contain asbestos.

- **Heating appliances and domestic equipment**

Asbestos was used in some warm air heating systems, electric storage heaters (up to 1976), in flameless catalytic gas heaters (up to 1988), Capricorn Fires & Back Boilers and some early 'coal effect' gas fires.

It has also been used in domestic equipment, such as oven gloves, ironing boards, seals on cooker doors and fire blankets, and in brake linings and pads.

How can I identify products or materials containing asbestos?

Since 1976 British manufacturers have put labels on their products to show they contain asbestos, and since 1986 all products containing asbestos carry the European label.

The supplier or manufacturer of a product may be able to tell you if it contains asbestos.

Often homes built at the same time contain similar materials - your neighbours may know if surveys for asbestos have been done.



The Asbestos Register

Stroud District Council is compiling a register of homes which have been surveyed, which records the type, location, and condition of the materials present, if any, this work is ongoing.

Remember, asbestos-containing products can look very similar to those not containing asbestos - if in doubt SEEK ADVICE.

What should I do if I suspect there is asbestos in my home?

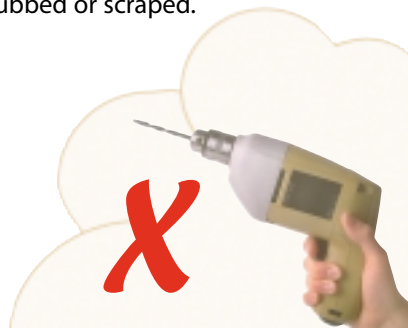
- Asbestos materials in good condition that cannot readily be damaged are best left where they are because removal can lead to higher levels of fibres in the air for some time. Check the condition of asbestos materials from time to time to make sure they have not become damaged or started to deteriorate.
- Asbestos materials that are slightly damaged can sometimes be repaired by sealing or enclosing the material; it is not Government policy to remove all Asbestos containing materials.

- Asbestos materials that are badly damaged or deteriorating can release dust and should be removed. Some asbestos materials (sprayed asbestos, lagging or insulating boards) must always be removed by contractors with a special license issued by the Government. These licensed contractors have to follow regulations to ensure asbestos is safely removed.

Take care when doing DIY

If you have asbestos materials in your home, extra care should be taken when doing DIY. **DO NOT** attempt work involving sprayed asbestos, lagging or insulating boards, as this must be undertaken by a licensed asbestos removal contractor. If you do any DIY with asbestos materials take the following precautions:

- Do not drill, cut or disturb asbestos unless absolutely necessary. Do not scrape or sand asbestos materials before painting and decorating. Some types of asbestos materials are very soft and can release large numbers of fibres if rubbed or scraped.



Remember . . .

- Avoid disturbing or damaging asbestos materials in good condition
- If you have damaged or deteriorating asbestos materials in your home then **'seek advice'**
- Do not keep using oven gloves or other small items containing asbestos - dispose of them safely (see section on disposal of asbestos)

- If you think that your warm air heating system, electrical storage heating system or flameless catalytic gas heater may contain asbestos then **'seek advice'** from your local gas or electricity supplier. If they do contain asbestos, do not attempt to dismantle these appliances yourself, but **'seek advice'** from the council.



How should I dispose of asbestos?

Wet small amounts of asbestos waste and put it in a strong plastic bag - seal this tightly and clearly mark it **'ASBESTOS'** and put it in a **second clear bag**.

Do not break up large asbestos cement sheets - they do not need to be sealed in bags but should be **double wrapped** in polythene or similar sheeting and disposed of as asbestos waste.

Do not put asbestos waste in the dustbin - A tip is available in Cheltenham on Saturday mornings by prior appointment Telephone 01242 680010

Remember . . .

- Avoid creating asbestos dust
- Avoid breathing asbestos dust
- Asbestos material in good condition should be left alone
- If you think you may have asbestos-containing products in your house, **'seek advice'** before you take any action

ASBESTOS



Advice from Stroud District Council

If you live in a council home and want more advice or information on asbestos in your home, please contact

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