



Delivery of a high quality, sustainable, repairs service with positive community benefits

Asbestos: The Facts

What is asbestos?

Asbestos is a natural mineral (a fibrous silicate) found in rocks all over the world. It has been used commercially for about 150 years because it is strong, flexible and stable. This has led to its use in a wide range of building materials and products.

Are there any health risks?

Asbestos-containing material that is undamaged does not present a health risk, but if asbestos materials are damaged, drilled, sawn, scrubbed or sanded, there can be a risk.

When asbestos-containing material is damaged, fibres can be released into the air, sometimes getting into the lungs where they may stay for a long time. This may cause thickening of the lungs and eventually cancer. The level of risk depends on how easily the fibres are released, the type of asbestos contained within the material, the length of exposure and the amount of damage to the actual material.

Is everyone exposed to asbestos?

There are asbestos-containing materials in about 5.5 million buildings in the UK. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE is a government agency to prevent ill health) says that there is a very low level of asbestos fibres in the air generally.

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

Where could I find asbestos?

Building materials containing asbestos were widely used from 1950 to around 1999, particularly from the 1960's onwards. So houses and flats built or refurbished around this time may contain asbestos materials. Asbestos was banned in the UK in 1999.

If you think asbestos materials may be in your home, don't panic!

Asbestos in good condition will not release asbestos fibres. There is no danger unless the fibres are released and inhaled into the lungs.