

OPERATE IN THE **SUCCESS ZONE**



# ASBESTOS IN THE HOME

## INFORMATION HANDBOOK

AN OVERVIEW OF THE RISKS OF ASBESTOS IN THE HOME AND HOW TO DEAL WITH IT SAFELY

**SGS**

# ASBESTOS IN THE HOME

**ASBESTOS IS NOT  
DANGEROUS IF IT IS IN  
GOOD CONDITION AND  
LEFT ALONE**

This leaflet 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.

## **WHAT IS ASBESTOS?**

Asbestos is a naturally occurring fibrous mineral that is found in many countries throughout the world. There are a number of different types of asbestos, however the commonly occurring ones are white (crysotile), brown (amosite) and blue (crocidolite).

Asbestos fibres are very strong and resistant to heat and chemicals. This has led to their use in a wide range of building materials. It has been estimated that asbestos was used in more than 3000 commercial products. Although properties built after 1990 are much less likely to contain asbestos, it was only banned in all its forms in 1999.

## **WHY MAY ASBESTOS BE A PROBLEM?**

When asbestos materials age or become damaged they can release fibres into the air. These can be breathed 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. The people most at risk from asbestos are those who could come across it during their work and disturb it, such as carpenters, electricians and other tradespeople doing repair and maintenance tasks in older buildings. Over the course of their working lives, such people may be accidentally exposed to asbestos a number of times, increasing their risk of developing health problems. Workplace regulations now protect such people.

## **IS EVERYONE EXPOSED TO ASBESTOS?**

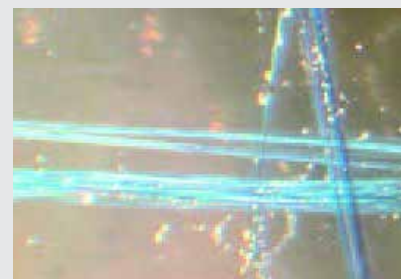
There is a very low level of fibres in the air everywhere because asbestos has been used widely and is a naturally occurring material. Exposure to this low level of fibres is unlikely to harm people's health.

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 appropriate action to take.

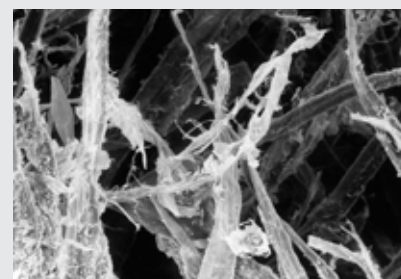
High, short-term exposures to asbestos fibres can occur during DIY work. For this reason, try not to raise dust when working with materials that might contain asbestos, and avoid sanding or drilling.



*Amosite - brown asbestos during analysis*



*Crocidolite - blue asbestos during analysis*



*Crysotile - white asbestos during analysis*

# THE TYPES OF **ASBESTOS** MATERIALS THAT MAY BE FOUND IN **HOMES** ARE DESCRIBED BELOW



## INSULATING BOARD

ASBESTOS CONTENT: **20-45%**

Insulating board has been used for fire protection, heat and sound insulation. It is particularly common on 1960s to early 1970s system-built housing and is found in materials such as ducts, infill panels, ceiling tiles, wall lining and bath panels in particular. It is unlikely to be found in buildings constructed after 1985.

---

## ASBESTOS-CEMENT PRODUCTS

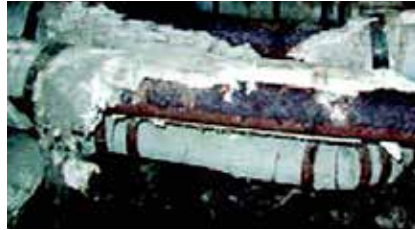
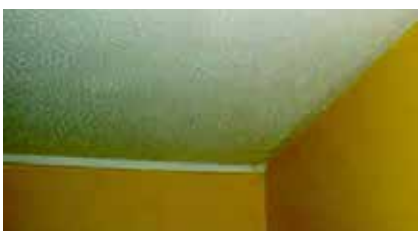
ASBESTOS CONTENT: **MAINLY 10-15%**

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, soffits 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 on guttering and drain pipes. Use has declined since 1976, but asbestos-cement was only finally banned in 1999.

Asbestos-cement products are unlikely to release high levels of fibres because of the way that they are made, unless they are subject to extreme abrasion such as sanding or drilling.

Damage from weathering may also release a small amount of fibres.



## LAGGING

ASBESTOS CONTENT: **55-100%**

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 1985.

---

## HEATING APPLIANCES/ DOMESTIC EQUIPMENT

ASBESTOS CONTENT: **VARIED**

Asbestos was used in some warm air heating systems, electric storage heaters (up to 1976) and in flameless catalytic gas heaters (up to 1988) and some early 'coal effect' gas fires. It has also been used in domestic equipment, such as oven gloves and ironing boards, seals on cooker doors and fire blankets. Asbestos has also been used in brake linings and pads.



## SPRAYED COATING

ASBESTOS CONTENT: **UP TO 85%**

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 1985. Sprayed asbestos has since been removed from many buildings, or sealed to prevent fibres being released.

---

## OTHER BUILDING MATERIALS

ASBESTOS CONTENT: **VARIED**

Asbestos has been used in a variety of other building materials, for example, in decorative coatings such as textured paints and plasters. These were widely used but supply and application has been prohibited since 1992. Plastic floor tiles, roofing felts, tapes, ropes, felts and blankets may also contain asbestos.



# WHERE IS ASBESTOS FOUND?

*Asbestos can also be found in floor tiles and water tank insulation*

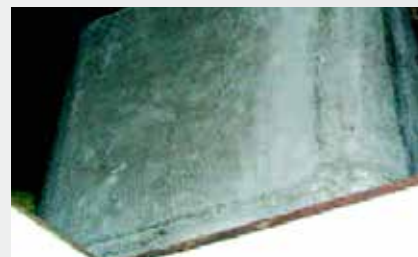
Building materials containing asbestos were widely used from 1930, particularly from the 1960s onwards. So, houses and flats built or refurbished at this time may contain asbestos materials.

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.



## REMEMBER...

- 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 insulation very rarely contains asbestos



## ADVICE IF ASBESTOS MATERIALS ARE SUSPECTED

If you are in any doubt about whether your home may contain asbestos products, SEEK ADVICE and follow these guidance notes:

### WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I SUSPECT THERE IS ASBESTOS IN MY HOME?

Asbestos materials in good condition that cannot be readily damaged are often 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. If you are planning home improvements or maintenance and have asbestos in your home, always inform builders, maintenance workers or contractors before they start work.

Asbestos materials that are slightly damaged can sometimes be repaired by sealing or enclosing the material – SEEK ADVICE on the most appropriate action.

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 licence issued by the government's Health & Safety Executive. These licensed contractors have to follow

regulations to ensure asbestos is safely removed. Further advice on asbestos removal can be found from the Health & Safety Executive website [www.hse.co.uk/asbestos](http://www.hse.co.uk/asbestos).

Sometimes it is dangerous to have asbestos materials removed – for instance fire-protection materials – without replacing them with a suitable alternative.

### HOW CAN I IDENTIFY PRODUCTS OR MATERIALS CONTAINING ASBESTOS?

- The supplier or manufacturer of a product (such as makes and models of boilers) may be able to tell you if it contains asbestos
- If you are a social housing resident, contact them if you have any concerns about asbestos
- If you are a home owner, your Environmental Health Department may be able to help as they may have information about asbestos in properties in your area
- Alternatively feel free to contact SGS DMW Environmental Safety Ltd on 01902 791565 for advice and guidance

Remember, asbestos-containing products can look very similar to those not containing asbestos – if in doubt seek advice.

## REMEMBER!

- Avoid disturbing or damaging asbestos material 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 your local council

# TAKE CARE WHEN DOING DIY



If you have asbestos containing materials in your home, extra care should be taken when doing DIY work in the home. You may be able to carry out some work on lower-hazard materials such as floor tiles, bitumen sink pads and textured coating safely assuming that you work in a safe manner including:

- Keep other people away from the area of work
- Wear protective clothing (e.g. overalls) and avoid breathing in asbestos dust (a disposable CE marked FFP3 dust mask is recommended)
- Keep asbestos materials wet to avoid producing dust

- Work outside if possible and avoid working overhead
- Use hand tools rather than power tools
- Carefully wrap and double-bag the material in strong polythene sacks that are labelled with the symbol for asbestos
- Contact your local council for advice on how to dispose of asbestos. Remember that this is classed as 'hazardous waste' and cannot be disposed of along with normal building waste

Avoid disturbing any materials that could contain asbestos. Remember that cutting, drilling or sanding asbestos can release very high levels of dust.

## REMEMBER!

- Avoid creating asbestos dust
- Avoid breathing asbestos dust
- Asbestos material in good condition should be left alone
- Avoid working on any material containing asbestos. NEVER work on the more dangerous asbestos materials such as lagging, sprayed coatings and insulating board
- If you think you may have asbestos-containing products in your house, SEEK ADVICE from your local council before you take any action

## WHY CHOOSE SGS?

SGS is the world's leading inspection, verification, testing and certification company. We are recognized as the global benchmark for quality and integrity. With more than 94,000 employees, we operate a network of more than 2,600 offices and laboratories around the world.

We offer asbestos services in the UK and also in many countries across the globe.

**CONTACT  
US TODAY**  
**FOR A NO  
OBLIGATION QUOTE**

## SGS DMW ENVIRONMENTAL SAFETY LTD

Unit 4, Calibre Industrial Park  
Laches Close  
Four Ashes  
Wolverhampton  
WV10 7DZ



Phone: +44 (0)1902 791565  
Fax: +44 (0)1902 791595



[www.sgs.co.uk/ehs](http://www.sgs.co.uk/ehs)



[sgsdmwsafety@sgs.com](mailto:sgsdmwsafety@sgs.com)

**OUR SERVICES  
INCLUDE:**

- Health safety and environmental consulting
- Asbestos surveys and analysis
- Asbestos consulting services
- Water hygiene services
- Legionella risk assessments
- Training services

**WWW.SGS.COM**  
**WWW.SGS.CO.UK**

**DMW ENVIRONMENTAL SAFETY LTD IS NOW PART OF SGS, THE WORLD'S LEADING INSPECTION,  
VERIFICATION, TESTING AND CERTIFICATION COMPANY.**

**WHEN YOU NEED TO BE SURE**

