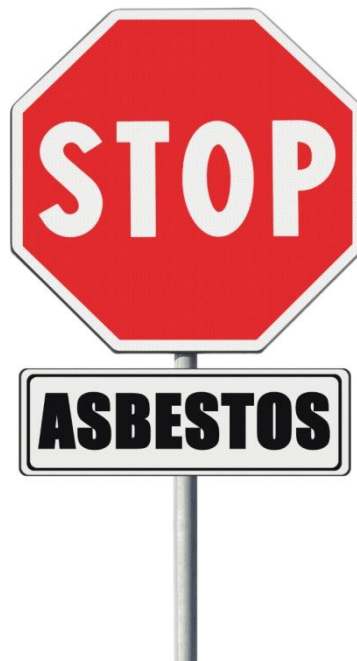




# Asbestos in Your Home



Your guide on where it may be used and what to do if it's in your home – the facts

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## **Asbestos in Your Home**

This booklet sets out Sandbourne Housing Association's approach to asbestos and aims to give you the facts and where it may be used and what to do if it is in your home.

This information is based on the booklet 'Asbestos in the Home' published by the DETR (Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions) in 1999 and the Health & Safety Executive (HSE). See: [Asbestos in your home - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk).

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.

## **About asbestos**

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.

## **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 lungs 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 disease, 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 have 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 widely used.

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 exposure 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. Loft or cavity wall insulation does not contain asbestos.

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

- **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 flats 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, but asbestos cement is still being used, particularly in roofing and cladding products. Asbestos cement products are unlikely to release high levels of fibres because of the way they are made, unless they are subject to extreme abrasion.

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

- **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, cushion flooring, roofing felts, tapes, ropes, felts and blankets can also contain asbestos.

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

- Asbestos materials in good condition that cannot readily be 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.

The Association will also check the condition of the asbestos materials periodically, depending on the type and how it has been used in the property.

- Asbestos materials that are slightly damaged can sometimes be repaired by sealing or enclosing the material – please report any such damage immediately to the Association.

### **REMEMBER:**

- Avoid disturbing or damaging asbestos materials in good condition.
- If you have damaged or deteriorating asbestos materials in your home, then inform the Association.

## Take care when doing DIY!

If you have asbestos materials in your home, extra care should be taken when doing DIY.

If you do any DIY with asbestos materials, take the following precautions:

1. Keep other people away from the area of work.

2. Wear protective clothing (eg overalls), preferably disposable, and avoid breathing in asbestos dust (a disposable dust mask 'CE' marked to EN 149 with FFP2 particulate filters is recommended).
3. Keep asbestos materials wet to avoid producing dust.
4. 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.
5. Use hand tools rather than power tools.
6. Do not use a domestic vacuum cleaner to clear up the dust. Hire an industrial vacuum cleaner that conforms to BS 5415 (Type H).
7. When you have finished work, clean up and then take off the overalls carefully to avoid raising any dust which may have collected in the fabric.

In the case of disposable overalls, double-bag them, clearly marked 'ASBESTOS' on the bag and dispose of them as asbestos waste. Wash non-disposable overalls straight away, separately from other clothing, in a washing machine.

## **Remember!**

- **Avoid creating asbestos dust.**
- **Avoid breathing asbestos dust.**
- **Asbestos material in good condition should be left alone.**

## Need more information?

The Regulator of Social Housing requires landlords to appoint a lead officer for health and safety. Sandbourne has appointed the Head of Housing to that role.

If you need more information, you can:

Write to us at our registered office:

Beech House, 28-30 Wimborne Road, Poole, BH15 2BU

Email: [repairs@sandbourne.org.uk](mailto:repairs@sandbourne.org.uk)

Website: [www.sandbournehousingassociation.org.uk](http://www.sandbournehousingassociation.org.uk)

Telephone us on: 01202 671222

Please note that telephone calls to the registered office number above may be recorded for information and training purposes.

In addition, we do have a range of other leaflets on specific topics, available on our website or upon request from our office.