

Asbestos in the home

Asbestos is a naturally occurring mineral which was valued for its heat insulation and fire protection characteristics and its resistance to acid and alkali, making it virtually indestructible. As a fibrous material it was also a good bonding agent. These properties meant it was a perfect building material and asbestos was used in over 4000 products.

Unfortunately, asbestos was also found to cause respiratory illnesses such as lung cancer, asbestosis, and mesothelioma. This led to a complete ban in the use of asbestos in 1999. If your home was built before the year 2000, there is a chance this building material may have been used in your home.

The threat from asbestos is in inhaling airborne fibres. Left undisturbed and in good condition most asbestos containing materials will not present a danger.

It is our responsibility to deal with any asbestos found in your home but that does not mean we will automatically take it out. Sometimes the removal process has more risk to it than leaving the asbestos where it is, although we may remove it when we do home improvements.

Commonly found asbestos containing materials in the home are:

- **Vinyl floor tiles** - Fibre release is unlikely to be a hazard under normal conditions. Broken edges are still unlikely to release fibres but should be reported so loose tiles and debris can be collected, and uneven surfaces made good. Not all vinyl floor tiles contain asbestos.
- **Decorative textured coatings** - ('Artex' type coating). Generally fibres are well contained in the coating and even if badly damaged, there is a low likelihood of fibre release. Not all textured coatings contain asbestos.
- **Asbestos cement sheet** - It is not considered to be a problem if this is outside the home, as commonly used on garage/shed roofs, or general roofing products. It is likely to release increasing levels of fibres if sanded, hand sawn or worked on with power tools. Cleaning asbestos-containing roofs may also release fibres.
- **Asbestos insulating board (AIB)** - AIB can be easily broken, releasing significant fibre amounts and significant surface release if sanded. Sawing and drilling will also give significant releases of fibre. Whilst painted board can remain in place, broken or raw unpainted board should be reported so it can be treated (encapsulated) or removed.
- Many other materials such as mastics and bituminous products may also contain small amounts of asbestos.



Can a single exposure give an asbestos-related disease?

All exposures to asbestos should be avoided, however, that does not mean that you should necessarily worry about a one-off exposure. Although accidental exposures to asbestos may occur and cause concern and distress, your risk of developing an asbestos-related disease depends on how much asbestos you are exposed to, for how long and on how many different occasions. A one-off short-term exposure is unlikely to lead to illness.

If you find damaged or broken material that may contain asbestos then do not touch it or try to alter it, keep away from the area and call the repairs line on 01508 532000. Alternatively, please email the Asbestos Team at Saffron using asbestos@saffronhousing.co.uk.

Further information regarding asbestos can be found on the HSE website:
<https://www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/home.htm>

Contact us:

 01508 532000

 asbestos@saffronhousing.co.uk

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