

ASBESTOS IN THE HOME



This information will help you understand asbestos: what it is, its health effects, where it is in your home and what to do about it.

Even if asbestos is present in your home, it is usually **NOT** a serious problem. The presence of asbestos in a home or building is not hazardous unless the asbestos materials are damaged. Damaged asbestos may release fibers and become a health hazard.

THE BEST THING TO DO WITH ASBESTOS MATERIAL IN GOOD CONDITION IS TO LEAVE IT ALONE!

Disturbing asbestos that is in good condition may create a health hazard where none existed before. Read this before you have any asbestos material inspected, removed or repaired.

WHAT IS ASBESTOS?

Asbestos is a mineral fiber. There are several types of asbestos fibers. Asbestos fibers cannot be seen with the naked eye. These fibers come in different types and can be positively identified only with a special type of microscope. In the past, asbestos was widely used in a variety of products to strengthen them and to provide heat insulation and fire resistance.

WHERE CAN I FIND ASBESTOS AND WHEN CAN IT BE A PROBLEM?

Most products made today do not contain asbestos. Those few products which still contain asbestos that could be inhaled are required to be labeled as such. However, until the 1970's, many types of building products and insulation materials used in homes contained asbestos. Common products that might have contained asbestos in the past and conditions which may release asbestos fibers include:

- STEAM PIPES, BOILERS and FURNACE DUCTS insulated with an asbestos blanket or asbestos paper tape. These materials may release asbestos fibers if damaged, repaired or removed improperly.
- RESILIENT FLOOR TILES (vinyl asbestos, asphalt and rubber), the backing of VINYL SHEET FLOORING, and ADHESIVES used for installing floor tile. Sanding these tiles can release asbestos fibers. Scraping or sanding the backing of sheet flooring during removal may also release asbestos fibers.
- CEMENT SHEET, MILLBOARD and PAPER used as insulation around furnaces and wood-burning stoves. Repairing or removing appliances may release asbestos fibers. So may cutting, tearing, sanding, drilling or sawing insulation.
- DOOR GASKETS in furnaces, wood-burning stoves and coal stoves. Worn seals can release asbestos fibers during use.
- SOUNDPROOFING or DECORATIVE MATERIAL sprayed on walls and ceilings. Loose, crumbly or water-damaged material may release asbestos fibers. So will sanding, drilling or scraping the material.
- PATCHING and JOINT COMPOUND for walls and ceilings, and TEXTURED PAINTS. Sanding, scraping or drilling these surfaces may release asbestos fibers.
- ASBESTOS CEMENT ROOFING, SHINGLES and SIDING. These products are not likely to release asbestos fibers unless sawed, drilled or cut.
- ARTIFICIAL ASHES and EMBERS sold for gas-fired fireplaces. Also, other older household products such as FIREPROOF GLOVES, STOVE TOP PADS, IRONING BOARD COVERS, and HAIR DRYERS.
- AUTOMOBILE BRAKE PADS and LININGS, CLUTCH FACINGS and GASKETS.

WHAT DO I DO IF I SUSPECT AN ASBESTOS PROBLEM IN MY HOME?

You need to determine the condition of the suspected asbestos material. Materials in good condition should have the following characteristics:

**NO RIPS
NO TEARS
NO SMALL PIECES LYING AROUND**

**REMEMBER, THE BEST THING TO DO WITH ASBESTOS IN GOOD CONDITION IS TO
LEAVE IT ALONE!!**

Asbestos material in poor condition will have rips, tears and/or small pieces lying around.

**ASBESTOS MATERIALS IN POOR CONDITION MUST BE HANDLED BY PROFESSIONAL
ASBESTOS ABATEMENT CONTRACTORS!!**

HOW DO I KNOW FOR SURE IF SUSPECT MATERIAL IN MY HOME REALLY DOES CONTAIN ASBESTOS?

Laboratory analysis is the only way to determine if the material does, in fact, contain asbestos. The first thing you need to do is to contact a consulting firm. Ask to have one of their certified Asbestos Building Inspectors or Investigators come to your home and take a sample or samples. Check their photo-ID as proof they are certified before the samples are taken. The samples must be analyzed by a City of Philadelphia certified laboratory. You should receive a copy of the original laboratory report. For your protection, be sure that the company you contract to perform any necessary asbestos repair is not associated with the company you chose to take the samples.

HOW DO I GO ABOUT CHOOSING AN ASBESTOS ABATEMENT CONTRACTOR?

BEFORE HIRING A CONTRACTOR:

- Make sure the contractor has been licensed by Air Management Services as an asbestos abatement contractor and ask to see a copy of the current license.
- Make sure the employees working for the asbestos abatement contractor have been licensed by the Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry as certified asbestos abatement workers and supervisors. The asbestos abatement workers must have a photo-ID as proof that they are certified.
- Require the contractor to visit your home and look at the asbestos material that you want removed or repaired - NO CONTRACTOR SHOULD QUOTE YOU A PRICE OVER THE PHONE WITHOUT SEEING THE JOB FIRST!
- Get more than one written estimate with the asbestos removal or repair procedures explained in detail.
- Ask the contractor for a list of references including phone numbers. Make sure you check the references.

ONCE I HAVE CHOSEN MY CONTRACTOR, WHAT SHOULD I EXPECT TO RECEIVE AND SEE?

Once you decide to contract with a company to remove or repair the asbestos material, make sure the contractor spells out, in writing, all the parts of the job. You should receive the following information in writing:

- ✓ A formal proposal signed by a representative of the contractor stating the exact amount of asbestos material involved in the project and a firm cost for the job.
- ✓ A copy of the notification to Air Management Services.
- ✓ A description of the abatement methods to be used.
- ✓ A copy of the contractor's current certificate of insurance. Make sure the policy covers asbestos related claims and the insurance covers problems discovered *after* the job is over, not just claims made during the job.
- ✓ A guarantee that you will receive copies of all the air test results and a copy of the waste shipment record within 35 days. (If possible, you should hire an air monitoring firm independent from the contractor).
- ✓ A guarantee that the work area will be left clean and in condition for re-occupancy.
- ✓ A certificate of re-occupancy signed by a representative of the contractor.

WHO CAN I CALL FOR MORE INFORMATION OR IF I HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT WHAT MY CONTRACTOR IS DOING?

If you think your contractor did not notify Air Management Services, is not removing asbestos properly or have questions about removal, or you would like to obtain more information on the City's asbestos regulations, you should call the Philadelphia Department of Public Health at (215) 685-7576. In case of an emergency during evening or weekend hours, call 311.