

# Asbestos in your home

Where it might be, what you should do and how we can help



## Introduction

This guide helps you to understand more about asbestos. It explains what it is, why it might be a problem, where it might be found, and how to deal with it.

## What is asbestos?

Asbestos is a naturally occurring clay-like material, which consists of tiny fibres. It is a very useful building product because it is easily shaped, fireproof and cheap. It was widely used in the building industry, until the adverse health effects of exposure to loose asbestos fibres were widely known.

## Why may asbestos be a problem?

Asbestos cannot harm anybody unless they breathe in asbestos fibres. Therefore, products containing asbestos do not normally present a problem unless they become damaged or worn, and the asbestos fibres are released into the air.

If this happens, the fibres can be breathed deep into the lung where they may stay for a long time. 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, or have washed the dusty clothing of those who worked with asbestos, are most likely to be affected. These people are now protected by law, including the Control of Asbestos regulations 2006.

## How can I identify products or materials containing asbestos?

You can't. The only way to tell for sure is to have a sample taken and sent for analysis. This is a specialist job which can only be carried out by specially licensed contractors and laboratories.

## What should I do?

If you have been told or suspect there is asbestos in your home – don't worry. It is very unlikely that the levels of any asbestos fibres found in your home will be harmful. Asbestos products cannot harm you unless there are loose fibres which can be breathed in over a period of time.

It is usually best to leave asbestos materials in good condition where they are, because removal can lead to higher levels of fibres in the air for some time.

Sometimes it is dangerous to have asbestos materials removed. For example fire protection materials cannot be removed unless they are replaced with a suitable alternative.



If you think you might have damaged asbestos materials in your home you should tell us straight away.

High, short-term exposure to asbestos fibres can happen during DIY work. You should avoid sanding and drilling any materials containing asbestos. You must not attempt to remove any asbestos without asking our permission first.

## How can Nottingham City Homes help?

We are now carrying out a survey programme to establish whether there is asbestos in council homes. Once we've surveyed your home we will give you a report explaining what we've found.

Nottingham City Homes has surveyed the shared parts of our sheltered schemes and blocks of flats. Any asbestos in these areas will either be removed or sealed with special paint, or left in place and inspected every year.

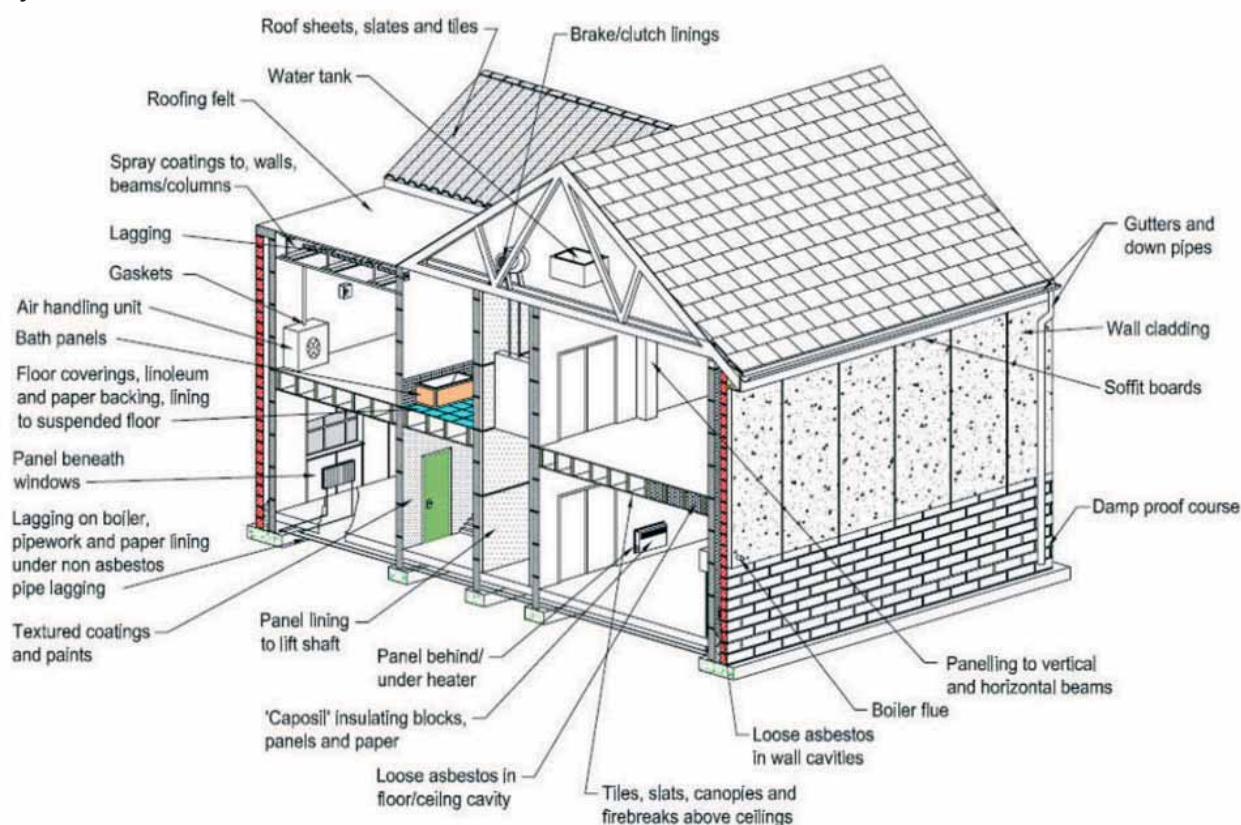
## Where might I find asbestos?

Building materials containing asbestos were widely used from 1930 to the mid 1980s, particularly from the 1960s onwards. This means houses and flats built or refurbished at this time may contain asbestos.

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, and since 1993 the use of asbestos in most products has been progressively banned.

It is not always easy to tell whether a product contains asbestos, because modern asbestos-free materials often look similar.

This drawing shows where asbestos materials are often found in the type of property where you live in. This is not a comprehensive list and only a guide to use before your property has its individual asbestos survey.



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## Different types of asbestos materials that may be found in your home

### Insulating board

Insulating board has been used for fire protection, heat and sound insulation. It is particularly common in 1960s and 1970s 'system-built' housing and can be found in materials such as ducts, infill panels, ceilings tiles, and bath panels. It is unlikely to be found in buildings constructed after 1982.

### Lagging

Asbestos lagging has been used for thermal insulation of pipes and boilers. It was widely used in the boiler houses and heating plants of public buildings and 'system-built' flats during the 1960s to early 1970s.

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 1986. Loft or cavity wall insulation does not contain asbestos.

### Sprayed coating

Sprayed asbestos coatings were used for fire protection of structural steel and may be found in non-traditional steel framed buildings. It is rarely found in exposed areas in domestic dwellings.

### Asbestos-cement products

Asbestos-cement is the most widely used asbestos material in homes. It was used 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 drain pipes.

Asbestos has been used much less in these areas since 1976, but asbestos-cement products are still 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 (sanding).

### 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, including 'Artex'. These are still widely in place but it is unlikely that any coatings applied since 1988 have any asbestos in them. Plastic floor tiles, roofing felts and tapes, heat resistant ropes, felts and blankets can also contain asbestos.

### Heating appliances and domestic equipment

Asbestos was used in some warm air heating systems and some early 'coal effect' gas fires. Asbestos has also been used in car brake linings and pads.



## Where can I find out more?

### **Nottingham City Homes Asbestos team**

Telephone: (0115) 915 7027

Email: [asbestos@nottinghamcityhomes.org.uk](mailto:asbestos@nottinghamcityhomes.org.uk)

### **Health and Safety Executive**

Website: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/index.htm>

### **Asbestos Information Centre**

Website: <http://www.aic.org.uk>

### **The Asbestos Removal Contractors' Association**

Website: <http://www.arcaweb.org.uk/ARCA>

### **British Asbestos Newsletter**

Website: <http://www.lkaz.demon.co.uk>

