

HOME BUILDING SURVEY – ASBESTOS IN THE HOME – GENERAL ADVICE

This information is based on a booklet called “Asbestos in the home” published by the Department of Environment Transport and Regions in 1999.” This does not apply to commercial buildings. Ample information available on the internet so check updates /information as required. **This guidance is given with the best intentions but nothing in this advice shall create or be deemed to create any obligations whether expressed or implied.**

Dwellings built since the mid-1980s are unlikely to contain asbestos in the fabric of the building. 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. In 1999 there was a ban on importing asbestos into the UK. There is a very low level of fibres in the air everywhere because asbestos has been used widely. Exposure to this low level of fibres is unlikely to harm people’s health. Short-term high exposures to asbestos fibres can occur during maintenance work. For this reason, try not to raise dust when working with materials which might contain asbestos and avoid sanding or drilling wherever feasible. The types of asbestos materials that may be found in homes are described below:-

Asbestos insulating board – asbestos content in between 20 and 45 percent. Common in 1960s and 1970 system built housing. Fire protection, heat and sound insulation. Materials such as ducts, soffits, infill panels, ceiling tiles and panels. Unlikely in buildings constructed after 1982.

Asbestos lagging – asbestos content normally in between 55 and 100 percent. Used in public buildings and system built flats during the 1960s and early 1970s in areas such as boilers and heating plants. The use of asbestos for thermal insulation was banned in 1986. Very rarely found in homes, especially those constructed after the mid 1970s.

Asbestos sprayed coatings – asbestos content up to 85 percent. Used for fire protection of structural steel and found in system built flats built during the 1960s. The use stopped in 1974. The spaying of asbestos has been prohibited since 1986. Sprayed asbestos has since been removed from many buildings or sealed to prevent fibres being released.

Asbestos cement products – asbestos content mainly in between 10 and 15 percent. Found in many types of building as profiled sheets or roofing/wall cladding, flat sheets as boards for linings to walls and ceilings, bath panels, roof 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 downpipes. The use has declined since 1976. 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. Slight risk of finding asbestos insulating board in the home.

Other building materials and products – asbestos have been used as a binder in decorative wall and ceiling coatings such as Artex. The supply and application has been prohibited since around 1988. Also used in a wide variety of materials such as floor tiles, cushion flooring, flat roofing mineral felt, ropes, oven gloves, ironing boards, fire blankets and in brake linings/pads. Used in some warm air heating systems, electric storage heaters up to 1976, catalytic gas heaters up to 1988 and some early flame effect gas fires.

What to do with asbestos products in the home? – Asbestos based materials in good condition are often best left where they are. If carrying out home maintenance, take appropriate health and safety care and inform workers. Asbestos materials that are badly damaged or deteriorating can release dust and should be removed. Some asbestos materials such as sprayed asbestos, lagging or insulating boards should be removed by specialist contractors. Do not remove asbestos products used as fire protection without replacing with a suitable alternative product. TRADES PEOPLE MUST FOLLOW THE HSE CODE OF PRACTICE CONTROL ASBESTOS REGULATIONS 2012. 04/10/2016