

Facts about Asbestos



Does Your Home Contain Asbestos?

Asbestos is a mineral fiber that in the past was commonly used in a variety of construction materials both as insulation and as a fire retardant. Today, asbestos is most commonly found in an older home's pipe and furnace insulation material, shingles, millboard, textured paints and other coating materials, and floor tiles.

Elevated concentrations of airborne asbestos occur after asbestos-containing materials are disturbed by cutting, sanding or other remodeling activities. Improper attempts to remove these materials can release asbestos fibers into the air, increasing asbestos levels and endangering people living in those homes.

If you think your home may have asbestos, don't panic! Asbestos is not necessarily dangerous if it is not damaged. The fibers are only released through cutting, sanding, scraping or other damage to the material. It is best to leave undamaged asbestos material alone if it is not likely to be disturbed. Once you identify asbestos-containing materials in your home, you should regularly check these materials for damage or deterioration. Check with local health, environmental or other appropriate officials to find out about proper handling and disposal procedures.

If you wish to make repairs to or remodel an area of your home that contains asbestos, you must select a contractor only after careful discussion of the asbestos in your home and what steps the contractor will take to clean up or remove it. Ask how he and his workers will minimize the spread of airborne asbestos particles in your home. Ask what type of training he and his workers have undergone. Ask for references and contact them to see if they were satisfied with the company's performance. Contact your local air pollution control board and the Better Business Bureau to check if the contractor has had any safety violations or legal actions filed against him in the past.

In addition, before the work begins, get a written contract specifying the work plan, cleanup, and the applicable federal, state, and local regulations which the contractor must follow (such as asbestos notification requirements and local asbestos disposal procedures). At the end of the job, get written assurances from the contractor that all procedures have been followed.