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# Asbestos in the home

**Facts about asbestos –  
where it may be found and  
what to do if you find it**



HOUSING AND PROPERTY SERVICES;

This leaflet addresses concerns and questions about asbestos in council homes. It explains what it is, where it is found, why it might be a problem and how to deal with it.

Asbestos is a natural mineral which was a very popular building material from the 1950s until its total ban in 1999. It was considered a cheap and effective building material due to its many properties which is why it was readily used within the construction industry. This led to it being used in a wide range of building materials and products, often as fireproofing. Asbestos cement has been widely used as cladding and roofing material and can still be found in garages and sheds.

Asbestos has been used in many properties but, if maintained correctly, should not be a hazard to health.

## **Why may asbestos be a problem?**

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When asbestos containing materials age or become damaged, it could potentially release fibres into the air. These fibres could cause various health conditions. These will not take effect immediately; they often take a long time to develop. Conditions associated with asbestos are Mesothelioma, Asbestos-related lung cancer, Asbestosis and Pleural thickening.

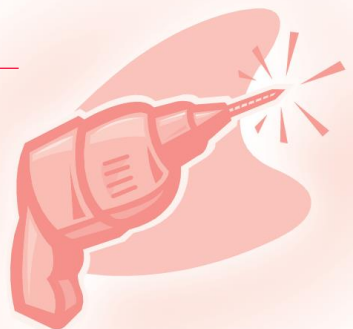
Those most likely to be affected by asbestos are those who have been exposed over many years or exposed at a high quantity. This would include working with asbestos, for example, within sectors such as construction industry and ship building.

Use of asbestos has since been banned from all new builds and maintenance tasks, workplace regulations have also been put in place to protect against potential asbestos in older buildings.

## **Is everyone exposed to asbestos?**

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Although asbestos maybe present within a property, as long as it is not damaged then it is usually safe.



It becomes a problem when the asbestos containing materials are damaged, as fibres can be released into the air. If you have damaged asbestos containing materials in your home, you should seek advice immediately from the Council's Operational Assets and Compliance Team on the appropriate action to take.

Do not carry out any DIY activities or removal on materials which may contain asbestos - contact the Council's Operational Assets and Compliance Team.

## **Where is asbestos found?**

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Building materials containing asbestos were widely used in both new builds and renovations between 1930 and the late 1980s. Houses and flats built or refurbished during this time may contain asbestos materials.

It is not always easy to tell whether a product contains asbestos as modern asbestos-free materials often look similar. Remember it is usually older products that contain asbestos. Loft or cavity wall insulation does not contain asbestos. If you have any doubts if materials are asbestos-free, then contact Council's Operational Assets and Compliance Team.

## **The types of asbestos materials that may be found in homes are:**

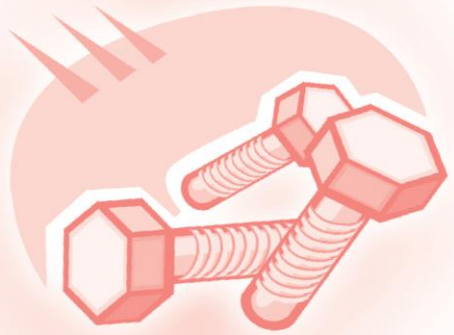
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### **Insulating board**

Insulating board has been used for fire protection, heat and sound insulation. It is particularly common in 1960s and 1970s system-built housing and is found in materials such as ducts, infill panels, ceiling tiles, wall lining, bath panels and partitions. 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 public buildings and system-built flats during the 1960s to early 1970s in areas such as communal boiler houses and heating plants. Asbestos lagging is very rarely found in homes, especially those constructed after the mid-1970s.



## Sprayed coating

Sprayed asbestos coatings were used for fire protection of structural steel and are commonly found in system-built flats built during the 1960s. The coatings were mainly applied around the core of the building such as service ducts and lift shafts. Use stopped in 1974 and the spraying of asbestos has been prohibited since 1986.

## Asbestos-cement products

Asbestos-cement is the most widely used asbestos containing material. It is found in many types of building as profiled sheets for roofing and wall-cladding, in flat sheets and partition boards for linings to walls and ceilings, 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 drainpipes.

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.

## **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. These are still widely in place, but supply and application has been prohibited since 1988. Plastic floor tiles, cushion flooring, roofing felts, tapes, ropes, felts and blankets can also contain asbestos.

## **Heating appliances and domestic equipment**

Asbestos was used in some warm air heating systems, electric storage heaters (up to 1976) and in flameless catalytic gas heaters (up to 1988) and some early 'coal effect' gas fires. It has also been used in domestic equipment, such as oven gloves and ironing boards, seals on cooker doors and fire blankets. Asbestos has also been used in brake linings and pads.

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

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Since 1976 British manufacturers have put labels on their products to show they contain asbestos, and since 1986 all products containing asbestos carry the European label. The supplier or manufacturer of a product may be able to tell you if it contains asbestos.

Asbestos surveys have been conducted on properties to identify if asbestos is present, and if so, what type it is. There are two types of surveys: Management and Refurbishment/Demolition.

A Management survey is a visual inspection and sampling of suspicious material in easy access areas. A Refurbishment and Demolishing survey is a more extensive inspection which involves looking within the fabric of the building to identify the potential presence of asbestos, such as lifting floorboards.

**Remember, asbestos-containing products can look very similar to those not containing asbestos. If in doubt, seek advice from the Council's Operational Assets and Compliance Team.**

## What should I do if I suspect there is asbestos in my home?

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Asbestos containing material in good condition that cannot readily be damaged are often best left where they are. Removal can lead to higher levels of fibres being present in the air for some time if not correctly removed. Check the condition of any asbestos material from time to time to make sure they have not become damaged or have started to deteriorate. Let the Councils Operational Assets and Compliance Team know if there is any change in the condition of the asbestos-containing material.



Asbestos containing materials that appear to be slightly damaged can sometimes be repaired by sealing or enclosing the material – let the Councils Operational Assets and Compliance Team know and they will arrange the most appropriate action.

Asbestos containing materials that are badly damaged and/or deteriorating can release dust and should be removed. Please advise the Councils Operational Assets and Compliance Team and they will arrange for an Inspector to assess the damage and if necessary, arrange removal.

Some asbestos containing materials (sprayed asbestos, lagging or insulating boards) must always be removed by contractors licensed to carry out such works by the Health and Safety Executive. These licensed contractors must follow Health and Safety Executive approved codes of practice and regulations to ensure the asbestos containing material is safely removed.

Sometimes it is dangerous to have asbestos containing materials removed, for instance fire-protection materials, without replacing them with a suitable alternative.

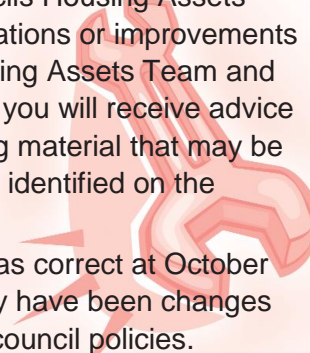
## Emergency asbestos fibre release

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- On occasion emergencies may arise that cause damage to asbestos containing material leading to accidental suspected asbestos fibre release. If an incident occurs in your home immediately seek advice from the Council's Operational Assets and Compliance Team.
- If an emergency occurs outside of normal office hours immediately seek advice from Qualis Management the Councils out of hours emergency service.

## Remember

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- Avoid disturbing or damaging asbestos materials in good condition.
  - If you suspect you may have damaged or deteriorating asbestos materials within your home, then seek advice from the Council's Operational Assets and Compliance Team.
  - If you think that your warm air heating system, electrical, storage heating system or flameless catalytic gas heater may contain asbestos then seek advice from the Council's Operational Assets and Compliance Team.
  - Remember, it is a condition your Tenancy Agreement that you obtain permission from the Councils Housing Assets Team before you undertake any alterations or improvements in your home. By contacting the Housing Assets Team and submitting a tenant alteration request you will receive advice on any suspected asbestos containing material that may be present in your home which has been identified on the Councils Asbestos Register.
  - The information given in this leaflet was correct at October 2020. Please be aware that there may have been changes since that time, such as new laws or council policies.
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## How to contact us:

### **Operational Assets and Compliance Team**

Civic Offices, High Street, Epping CM16 4BZ

Phone: 01992 564760

Email: [propertycompliance@eppingforestdc.gov.uk](mailto:propertycompliance@eppingforestdc.gov.uk)

### **Housing Assets Team**

Civic Offices, High Street, Epping CM16 4BZ

Phone: 01992 564166 and dial extension 2727

Email: [propertyassets@eppingforestdc.gov.uk](mailto:propertyassets@eppingforestdc.gov.uk)

### **Qualis Management**

Oakwood Hill Industrial Estate, Loughton, Essex IG10 3TZ

Phone: 0333 230 3464 (24-hour contact number)

Email: [repairs@qualismanagement.co.uk](mailto:repairs@qualismanagement.co.uk)

### **Epping Forest District Council**

Civic Offices, High Street, Epping CM16 4BZ

Phone: 01992 564000

[www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/housing](http://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/housing)

**Please tell us if you would like this information provided in an alternative format.**

## Useful websites

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### **Health & Safety Executive**

[www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos](http://www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos)

### **Asbestos Information Centre**

[www.aic.org.uk](http://www.aic.org.uk)