

Asbestos Guide for Tenants

CHS GROUP
housing, care, and community services in Cambridgeshire



Introduction

This guide is all about asbestos: what it is, its health effects, where it may be in the home, and what you can do about it.

If there is asbestos in your home, it is usually NOT a serious problem. Asbestos is not itself dangerous. Asbestos only becomes dangerous when it is damaged or is disturbed during work on your home.



Contents

Interesting facts about asbestos.....	4
What is asbestos?.....	6
When is asbestos a problem?.....	6
What are the health risks?.....	6
How does asbestos affect health?.....	7
Where is asbestos found?.....	7
How can I identify products or materials containing asbestos?.....	9
How does CHS manage asbestos in tenanted properties?.....	10
Asbestos do's and don'ts.....	12
What are my responsibilities?.....	13
Contact telephone numbers and address.....	14

Interesting facts

Asbestos 4000 BC–2004 AD

4000 BC Asbestos was used for wicks in lamps and candles. The substance was known as “asbestos”, meaning inextinguishable or unquenchable

2000-3000 BC The embalmed bodies of Egyptian pharaohs were wrapped in asbestos clothes to stop them decaying

2500 BC Used in Finland to strengthen clay pots

800-900 AD Charlemagne's tablecloth was supposedly made from woven asbestos

1000 Mediterranean peoples used chrysotile (white asbestos) from Cyprus and tremolite (green asbestos) from upper Italy to make cremation cloths, mats and wicks for temple lamps

1300-1400 Marco Polo visited an asbestos mine in China in the latter half of the 13th century.



He concluded that asbestos was a stone, debunking the myth that it was the hair of a woolly lizard

Early 1700s Evidence that asbestos papers and boards were made as early as 1700 in Italy

1712 Chrysotile (white asbestos) was mined in Russia during the reign of Peter the Great

1724 Benjamin Franklin brought a purse made of asbestos to England. It's now in the Natural History Museum

1828 First known US patent issued for asbestos-insulating material used in steam engines

About 1853 Asbestos helmets and jackets worn by Parisian Fire Brigade

Early 1870s Founding of large asbestos industries in Scotland, Germany and England with the production of "asbestos boards"

1896 The first asbestos brake linings were made by Ferodo Limited in England. The firm impregnated woven asbestos brake bands with resin

1907 Amosite (brown asbestos) was discovered in Transvaal, South Africa. The name comes from the initials of "Asbestos Mines of South Africa"

1931 Asbestos industry regulations were passed in the UK to address concerns that asbestos exposure, particularly among textile factory workers, led to lung damage

1939 In the "The Wizard of Oz", the Wicked Witch of the West appeared on a broom made of asbestos

1939-1945 Wartime paraphernalia including fireproof suits and parachute flairs contained asbestos

1945-1975 Post-war construction projects relied heavily on the use of asbestos, reaching an all-time high in 1973

1990s The solid fuel boosters of the space shuttle are insulated with asbestos – one of the few remaining current uses



What is asbestos?

Asbestos is a natural mineral (a fibrous silicate) found in rocks all over the world. It has been used commercially for about 150 years because it is strong, flexible and stable. The three types of asbestos used in the UK are: crocidolite (blue asbestos); amosite (brown asbestos) and chrysotile (white asbestos).

When is asbestos a problem?

When asbestos-containing materials are damaged or deteriorate with age, they can release tiny fibres into the air. These fibres can penetrate deep into the lungs. They can stay there a long time and can't be coughed out. Blue and brown asbestos are probably the most dangerous types.

What are the health risks?

There are asbestos-containing materials in about 5.5 million buildings in the UK. Because asbestos has been so widely used, there is a low level of asbestos fibres in the air everywhere. Yet the risk to the public from asbestos in the home is low. The greatest risk arises when asbestos is damaged or drilled, sawn, scrubbed or sanded. DIY work can result in brief but high levels of exposure. If you think a material might contain asbestos, don't work on it -

**Get expert advice by phoning
0800 197 4000.**

Asbestos remains the single greatest cause of work-related deaths in the UK. It probably kills up to 3,000 people a year, a figure that is expected to rise to 10,000 by 2010. You must assume that any asbestos is potentially deadly and handle it accordingly. (See the do's and don'ts section.)



How does asbestos affect health?

Asbestos fibres in the lungs can cause cancer and thickening of the lungs. One type of cancer, mesothelioma, is always fatal; and asbestosis is a crippling lung disease.

Where may asbestos be found?

Building materials containing asbestos were widely used from 1930 to the

mid-1980s, but particularly from the 1960s onwards. So houses and flats built or refurbished then may contain asbestos. However, identical properties may not contain the same materials. Different contractors may have used different materials at different times.

Here are some of the asbestos-containing products that might be found in a home.

Where asbestos is found

External structure

Roofing felt made with bitumen **Corrugated roofing sheets** – for sheds and garages
Durasteel panels – steel-framed sheets with an asbestos-containing core
Flat cladding sheets with or without an aggregate finish
Flat roof decking tiles – modular tiles used as a walking surface to spread the load on flat roofs
Profiled metal sheeting coated with asbestos fibres in bitumen
Rainwater downpipes
Rainwater guttering
Roof cladding – numerous brands and types
Roof slates

Internal structure

Airbricks
Bath panels
Bituminous paper lining to the roof
Bituminous acoustic pad fitted beneath stainless steel sinks
Chimney breasts – Cement panels used to form mock chimney breasts in timber-framed homes
Cold water tanks – in the loft space
Decorative ceiling tiles
Floor finish – Cushionfloor sheet vinyl
Floor tiles – rigid vinyl
Floor tiles – thermoplastic vinyl
Fire surrounds – heat and fire proof

External structure

Roof tiles

Roofing sheets – corrugated for sheds and garages

Soil and vent pipes

Undercloak – board supporting roof tiles where they overhang beyond brickwork. Usually found on the end of the house

Wall cladding sheets (double) – to early pre-fabs; both plain and decorative

Wall cladding sheets (single) – both plain and decorative

Window boxes – for flowers

Soffit boards – horizontal board beneath the roof overhang. They bridge the gap between brickwork and fascia board with the guttering attached

Window cills (external)



Internal structure

Flue pipes to heating systems

Insulation of warm air heating systems

Insulation – to central heating systems

Partition sheets or wallboard – rarely used in domestic property

Lagging – to pipes and boilers

Sprayed asbestos coatings – used for the fire protection of steel beams and other central services in system-built flats

Sprayed insulation coatings – rarely used in standard domestic properties, more likely to be found in large blocks of flats or steel-framed buildings

Textured decorative finish – to ceilings and occasionally walls. Artex is a well-known brand

Textured decorative paint

Window cill – black cast resin sheet from the manufacturer Eternit

Wall boarding to internal partitions, airing cupboard linings, shelving, duct and pipe covers

Loft or cavity wall insulation does not contain asbestos

Other places

Catalytic heaters – heaters that use gas in conjunction with a concealed flame to produce radiant infrared energy. The flameless type up to 1988 normally contains an asbestos panel

Coals and fake ash – in early 'coal effect' gas fires

Coal bunker – lid and slider panel to coal hole

Electric storage heaters – up to 1976, used for the heat retention blocks

Filler ropes surrounding oven doors and solid fuel fires

Fire blankets – in kitchens

Ironing boards – iron-rest heat pad

Portable heaters using LPG (liquid petroleum gas)

Plant containers

Oven gloves

Simmering mats – for the cooker

Asbestos has been used in some heat-resistant household products, such as oven gloves, simmering mats and ironing boards. The use of asbestos in these products decreased greatly around the mid-1980s. Since 1993 the use of asbestos in most products has been banned. Please note that the CHS asbestos survey does not include household items owned by the tenant. Asbestos is no longer used in goods such as toasters, hair dryers, gas and solid fuel appliances that conform to a British Standard. However, imported manufactured goods may still contain asbestos.

How can I identify products or materials containing asbestos?

You cannot tell whether a product contains asbestos simply by looking at it. Often asbestos is masked by other materials or is dyed, which disguises its true colour. Usually, it is older products that contain asbestos. If in doubt, it can be analysed by a laboratory. Remember, products that contain asbestos can look identical to those that don't – if in doubt, call the **CHS Repairs Helpline on 0800 197 4000**.

Since 1976 British asbestos manufacturers have put labels on most of their products to show they

contain asbestos, but labels are often removed after purchase or concealed when the products are put in position. From early 1986 all products have had to carry the European label (see below).



Warning

What if I think there is asbestos in my home?

If you are in doubt as to whether any material already contains asbestos, or if you think your home contains damaged asbestos material, then...

Don't try to deal with it yourself!

The supplier or manufacturer of a product may be able to tell you if it contains asbestos. Often homes built at the same time contain similar materials – your neighbours may know if surveys for asbestos have been done.

How does CHS manage asbestos in tenanted properties?

Asbestos-containing materials (ACMs) will have to remain in social housing for about the next 25-30 years. No council or housing association in the UK has the money or staff to remove them all. This is fully in line with the law and with central Government policy. CHS criteria for dealing with asbestos are shown opposite.

To gather information on asbestos in your home, CHS will continue to survey its properties. The survey is classed as a "Type 2 Non-invasive survey" by the Health and Safety Executive. Properties will be reinspected regularly, depending on the type and condition of asbestos and level of risk.

After receiving a survey result, CHS will assess the risk from any known ACMs and decide what action, if any, to take. All this information will be held on the Asbestos Register, which will be kept up to date.

Obligations of CHS

Cambridge Housing Society has a duty to:

- > take reasonable steps to determine the location and condition of materials likely to contain asbestos;
- > presume materials contain asbestos unless there is strong evidence that they do not;
- > make and keep an up to date record of the location and condition of the ACMs or presumed ACMs in the premises;
- > assess the likelihood of anyone being exposed to the fibres from these materials;
- > prepare a plan setting out how the risks from the materials are to be managed;
- > take the necessary steps to put the plan into action;
- > review and monitor the plan periodically; and
- > provide information on the location and condition of the materials to anyone who is liable to work on or disturb them.

If you are planning home improvements, always ask for our permission – we can check our records and advise if any asbestos is present or presumed to be present. We may have to carry out a further survey if the asbestos has to be removed. There may be an additional cost to you. We will discuss this with you at the time.



Where we are planning to carry out any improvement works in your home, we will be responsible for dealing appropriately with any ACMs, including the cost of removal.

CHS insists that all asbestos must be managed by contractors with a special licence issued by the Government. These licensed contractors have to follow strict regulations to ensure asbestos is safely handled.

Asbestos do's and don'ts

Do make regular checks of any material that you think contains asbestos. Don't touch it but look for signs of wear and damage such as tears, abrasions or water damage. Damaged material may release asbestos fibres, especially if you often disturb it by hitting or handling it, or if it is exposed to extreme vibration or airflow. If its condition has changed substantially since your last asbestos inspection, please telephone the **CHS Repairs Helpline** on **0800 197 4000**.

- > **Do** keep activities to an absolute minimum in any areas where damaged material may contain asbestos
- > **Do** take every precaution to avoid damaging asbestos material



- > **Do not** dust, sweep, or vacuum debris that may contain asbestos
- > **Do not** saw, sand, scrape or drill holes in asbestos materials
- > **Do not** trample dust or mess from materials that may contain asbestos through the house. It will result in other furnishings being contaminated and potentially more people being put at risk



What are my responsibilities as a CHS Customer?

Please remember that changes to the property are not permitted under the tenancy agreement with CHS without prior approval in writing.

In your garden there may be an old shed that you inherited or built many years ago. If this is not part of the original CHS property, this belongs to you and you have full responsibility for its condition and maintenance. Some sheds contain asbestos sheeting to the roof or walls. If you wish to carry out any work to a shed, CHS can offer simple guidelines. Please telephone **0800 197 4000**.

Soft asbestos, asbestos insulating board (similar to plasterboard), sprayed asbestos coatings and Artex (a decorative textured coating to ceilings and walls) must be removed by a professional company licensed by the Health and Safety Executive. The work must be undertaken in accordance with a strict code of practice involving use of specialised equipment and protective clothing.

Carrying out any work to any form of asbestos without knowledge, expertise and the appropriate protection will put people's health at risk. Fly-tipping puts others at serious risk. Your local dustcart compresses

and grinds up the waste from your bin, thereby putting the refuse collectors at risk. Also the standard domestic vacuum cleaner allows the very fine needle-like asbestos fibres to pass straight through the machine to be spread all over the house, thereby endangering the whole family.

Contact

CHS GROUP
housing, care, and community services in Cambridgeshire

CHS Group

Endurance House

Chivers Way

Histon, Cambridge

CB24 9ZR

Telephone: 0300 111 3555

www.chsgroup.org.uk

