

Things You Should Know about Asbestos

Asbestos is a naturally occurring mineral commonly found in homes, apartments and businesses constructed before 1980 – although it is still used in many building materials today. The name comes from the Ancient Greek word for inextinguishable and is the commercial name given to a variety of six naturally occurring fibrous minerals.

Once thought to be an ideal substance for home construction due to its high heat resistance, good insulation properties, flexibility and strength, asbestos was used in many materials, including:

- floor tiles
- roofs
- furnaces
- plumbing
- appliances
- fireplaces
- certain types of plaster and ceiling tiles
- packing materials
- cement products
- asphalt roofing
- tiles and linoleum flooring
- automotive brakes

It was later discovered that when handled, asbestos can separate into microscopic particles that are easily inhaled and contribute to mesothelioma and other lung diseases, with symptoms showing as early as 10 years after exposure.

A 1989 ban on asbestos was challenged in court and in 1991 the ban only applied to flooring felt and new uses after August

1990; rollboard, commercial, corrugated and specialty paper after August 1996; and certain spray applied decorative uses.

Although asbestos has not been mined in the United States since 2002, it is still mined in China, Brazil and Kazakhstan, with the majority from Russia. Many of the products imported from these countries contain asbestos. Asbestos is currently used in more than 3,000 products, like chalkboards, roofing tiles, fire curtains, floor backing and vinyl wall coverings.

How would you know if there was asbestos in your home? More than likely, you wouldn't. However, if you are looking to do repairs and/or renovations to your home, safety precautions should be taken in case there may be materials that contain asbestos. Unless it is deemed necessary by local regulations, removal is usually not required or recommended. If the asbestos is in good condition, it's probably best left alone or encased, such as putting carpet or new tile over floor tile that contains asbestos. If removal is necessary, a licensed asbestos contractor/consultant should do the removal and disposing of the contaminated materials. The potential for fiber releases increases once the asbestos containing material is disturbed, becoming friable and then airborne. Once in the air, asbestos fibers present a health hazard to those who inhale them.

More information on asbestos regulations can be obtained by contacting the agencies listed here: <http://www.dep.state.fl.us/air/emission/asbestos/asbestosmap.pdf> 🌿

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