

ASBESTOS SAFETY INFORMATION

What is asbestos?

Asbestos is a strong fibrous rock, which can resist heat and chemicals and was commonly used in building materials to provide insulation or a fire barrier. Asbestos was particularly in use between the 1950s and 1980s and as a result most properties built during this period are likely to contain some asbestos. From the early 1980s asbestos stopped being used in the construction of properties but was not finally banned until the 1990s.

Products which contain asbestos can look very similar to those that don't. The difference can often only be found under a microscope at a specialist laboratory.

When is asbestos a problem?

A material that contains asbestos is not in itself dangerous but it becomes dangerous if it is damaged as asbestos fibres can be released into the air. A significant release of fibres can be associated with maintenance activities such as drilling, cutting, and **worst of all sanding**.

Breathing in asbestos fibres can be harmful as some of the fibres may become lodged in the lungs. These fibres can eventually lead to asbestos-related diseases although there is usually a very long delay between having contact with asbestos fibres and illness – often between 15 and 60 years.

Where might asbestos be located?

The following list contains locations where asbestos is sometimes found:

Roof sheets and tiles	Textured wall and ceiling paints and coverings (artex)
Fascia and soffit boards	Duct panels (access to pipes)
Exterior cladding	Guttering and drain pipes
Bath panel	Panel (usually cement style) on back of doors
Fireplace panel	Some interior workings of boilers
Panel to underside of kitchen sink	Boiler flue pipes
Panel to underside of ironing board	Storage radiators
Water tank	Panels behind radiator/heater
Pipe lagging	Infill panels (above, windows/doors)
Garage/shed roofs	Floor tiles
Suspended ceiling tiles	Stair soffits

All these areas potentially contain asbestos and should be treated accordingly unless you know it is clear (for example, if you know asbestos has been removed and replaced by a non-asbestos product).

What is Co-op Homes doing to manage asbestos?

At Co-op Homes we're committed to ensuring that materials containing asbestos are kept in good condition and removed when necessary. Current advice from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) states that if materials containing asbestos are in good condition and unlikely to be disturbed then leaving them alone presents the least risk.

We maintain an asbestos register which includes all the communal areas of Co-op Homes' permanent properties. This gives details of when surveys were carried out, by whom and whether or not any suspect material was detected. This register is available for inspection to our contractors, local authorities, statutory authorities etc.

Where they have agreed to it, we will undertake asbestos surveys to the internal communal areas of our client co-operatives. Each co-op will have its own Asbestos Register and Management Plan arising from it. If any communal area is found to contain asbestos we will recommend to Management Committees that further surveys be carried out to individual homes also.

Any asbestos found would either then be removed by a registered specialist asbestos removal contractor, or if it is to be left in situ, encapsulation will be considered. A Management Plan will be put in place to deal with any potential disturbance, through either a reactive or planned major maintenance programme.

To ensure the safety of our contractors when disturbing (demolishing) building elements in homes, we may carry out site specific asbestos surveys when we plan to carry out major renovation or refurbishment works such as bathroom and/or kitchen replacements. This is normal procedure in the industry and our method of dealing with the risk of asbestos is considered good practice by the Health and Safety Executive

What you can do to prevent the release of asbestos fibres

If you're planning any home improvements and think you may have asbestos in your home, always talk to us first. Even if there is asbestos in your home, it will not cause problems unless it becomes disturbed or is damaged. If you suspect that asbestos-containing materials have been damaged please contact Co-op Homes on 0203 166 2608 or email customer.services@coophomes.coop.

We can check to see if we already have information about the material or can arrange to have a sample taken and tested to establish if asbestos is present. If asbestos is identified you will be provided with details of our plans to deal with it. We will provide this service free of charge for Co-op Homes' tenants. Please remember that asbestos does not present a hazard to health provided it is in good condition. However, where this is not the case we will deal with it in a safe and appropriate way.

Asbestos dos and don'ts

Do treat asbestos with respect

Don't drill, sand, saw or otherwise disturb any material which may contain asbestos

Don't carry out D.I.Y. work on any part of your home which you think may contain asbestos. Seek guidance from Co-op Homes

Do soak wallpaper before removing it and if possible use a steam stripper and then gently peel away the paper before decorating

Don't try to remove any textured coatings from ceilings. Wash areas of flaking paint before re-painting


Don't try to remove old floor tiles or linoleum. Leave them in place and lay new floor coverings over them

Do please remember: asbestos can be hazardous to health if handled incorrectly

For more information or advice please contact us at

8 Waldegrave Road Teddington, TW11 8AW

Email: home@coophomes.coop

: 020 3166 2608

June 2017