

Asbestos in the home

This booklet provides information about asbestos in the home and in communal areas.



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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 do not. 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:

Exterior of building

- Roof sheets and tiles
- Fascia and soffit boards
- Exterior cladding
- Guttering and drain pipes

Boilers

- Some interior workings of boilers
- Boiler flue pipes
- Storage radiators

Interior surfaces

- Textured wall and ceiling coatings (e.g. artex)
- Duct panels (access to pipe work)
- Infill panels (above, below or next to doorways/windows)
- Panel (usually cement style) on back of doors (typically boiler cupboard)
- Panels behind radiator/heater
- Floor tiles
- Suspended ceiling panels
- Stair soffits

Other items

- Bath panel
- Fireplace panel
- Panel to underside of kitchen sink
- Panel to underside of ironing board
- Water tank
- Pipe lagging
- Garage/shed roofs

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 has Co-op Homes done to manage asbestos?

At Co-op Homes we are 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 our own permanent properties. This gives details of when surveys were carried out, by whom and whether or not any suspect material was found in these areas. This register is available to all our contractors, local authorities, statutory authorities etc.

We will soon be undertaking asbestos surveys to the communal areas of our Managed Co-operatives where they have agreed to these and each Co-op will have it's own Asbestos Register and Management Plan. If any areas are found to contain asbestos within the internal communal areas, we will recommend to your Management Committees that further surveys are required to be carried out to the individual properties also, which is considered to be good practice by the Health and Safety Executive.

Any asbestos that is found would either then be removed by registered specialist asbestos removal contractors, or if it is to be left in situ, possibly encapsulated, a Management Plan would be put in place to deal with any potential disturbance through either day to day or major maintenance programme.

What can I do to prevent the release of asbestos fibres?

If you are 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 any problem unless it becomes disturbed or is damaged. If you suspect that asbestos-containing materials have been damaged please contact RHP on: 0208 568 4112.

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 what will be done. We will provide this service for our tenants, but leaseholders are, as always, responsible for their own fixtures and fittings.

It should be emphasised 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 via RHP
- 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 remember: asbestos can be hazardous to health if handled incorrectly

Accessibility

At Co-op Homes we are committed to a policy of equal access to all of our information. If you would like this booklet supplied in alternative formats, such as Braille, large print, on audio tape or in another language, please contact our parent organisation, RHP, on **0800 0322 433**, send an email to communications@rhp.org.uk or write to us at the address below.

Albanian	Sipas kërkesës, ky dokument gjithashtu gjendet edhe në gjuhë të tjera, me shkrim të madh dhe në formë dëgjimore.
Arabic	هذه الوثيقة متاحة أيضا بلغات أخرى والأحرف الطباعية الكبيرة وبطريقة سمعية عند الطلب.
Bengali	এই ডকুমেন্ট অন্য ভাষায়, বড় প্রিন্ট আকারে এবং অডিও টেপ আকারেও অনুরোধে পাওয়া যায়।
Farsi	این مدرک همچنین بنا به درخواست به زبانهای دیگر، در چاپ درشت و در فرمت صوتی موجود است.
Gujarati	આ દસ્તાવેજ વિનંતી કરવાથી બીજી ભાષાઓ, મોટા છાપેલા અક્ષરો અથવા ઓડિઓ રચનામાં પણ મળી રહેશે.
Hindi	अनुरोध पर यह दस्तावेज़ अन्य भाषाओं में, बड़े अक्षरों की छपाई और सुनने वाले माध्यम पर भी उपलब्ध है
Polish	Dokument ten jest na życzenie udostępniany także w innych wersjach językowych, w dużym druku lub w formie audio.
Punjabi	ਇਹ ਦਸਤਾਵੇਜ਼ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਵਿਚ, ਵੱਡੇ ਅੱਖਰਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਅਤੇ ਆਡੀਓ ਟੇਪ 'ਤੇ ਰਿਕਾਰਡ ਹੋਇਆ ਵੀ ਮੰਗ ਕੇ ਲਿਆ ਜਾ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ।
Somali	Waxaa kale oo lagu heli karaa dokumentigaan luqado kale, daabacaad ballaaran, iyo cajal duuban haddii la soo waydiisto.
Urdu	درخواست پر یہ دستاویز دیگر زبانوں میں، بڑے حروف کی چھپائی اور سننے والے ذرائع پر بھی میسر ہے۔