



This is an important document  
Please keep it in a safe place



# Asbestos in the Home

A guidance booklet for  
**home owners and occupiers**

# Asbestos Services

## Asbestos Analysis Services

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**Birmingham City Laboratories**      **Tel: 0121 303 9300**  
**Scientific Services**  
**Valepits Road**  
**Garretts Green**  
**Birmingham B33 0TD**

**Envirocare (Midlands) Ltd**      **Tel: 01527 66828**  
**Bordesley Hall**  
**The Holloway, Alvechurch**  
**Birmingham B48 7QB**

**Severn Trent Laboratories**      **Tel: 02476 421213**  
**STL Business Centre**  
**Torrington Avenue**  
**Coventry CV4 9GU**

## Removal and Disposal Services

**Marston Environmental Services Ltd**      **Tel: 02476 381515**  
**Eastlands Field Farm**  
**Marston Jabbett**  
**Bedworth, West Midlands**  
**CV12 9SD**

**PPF Waste Management Ltd**      **Tel: 0845 1301002**  
**The Pitch, Budden Road**  
**Coseley, West Midlands**  
**WV14 8JN**

**Note: The local authorities do not endorse any of the companies listed above, and cannot be held responsible for services provided.**

## Who to talk to

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### Warwickshire Local Authority Environmental Health contact telephone numbers:

Coventry City Council	02476 831859
North Warwickshire Borough Council	01827 715341
Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough Council	02476 376138
Rugby Borough Council	01788 533850
Stratford-on-Avon District Council	01789 267575
Warwick District Council	01926 456712

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Environment Agency	01926 889474
Health and Safety Executive (HSE)	0121 607 6200
Warwickshire County Council Waste Management	01926 412593

## 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.**

Even 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 gets damaged over time or is disturbed during work on your home. When damaged, asbestos releases fibres that can cause serious lung disease.

The three main types of asbestos	5
When is asbestos a problem?	5
What are the health risks?	5
How does asbestos affect health?	6
Where may asbestos be found?	6
How can I identify products or materials containing asbestos?	9
Asbestos do's and don'ts	10
Removal of asbestos cement products	11
How should I dispose of asbestos?	12
Dumped asbestos	12
Useful websites	13
Local authority telephone numbers	14
Asbestos services	15

## Useful websites

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Health & Safety Executive (HSE)  
[www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos](http://www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos)

For a list of HSE licensed asbestos contractors see:  
[www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/licensing/index.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/licensing/index.htm)

National Society for Clean Air  
& Environmental Protection  
[www.nasca.org.uk](http://www.nasca.org.uk)

Asbestos Information Centre Ltd  
[www.aic.org.uk](http://www.aic.org.uk)



## How should I dispose of asbestos?

**ASBESTOS WASTE MUST NOT BE PUT OUT WITH YOUR DOMESTIC REFUSE.** Your local dustcart compresses and grinds up the waste, thereby putting the refuse collectors at risk.

Carefully dispose of suspect items such as ironing board rests, oven gloves, simmering pads and old fire blankets as soon as possible. Don't try to unfasten the ironing board heat pad, or remove the fire blanket from its holder. By doing so you will increase the risk substantially and may create some dust and debris.

Certain waste disposal sites within the Warwickshire County Council area will accept small amounts only of asbestos waste provided it is placed inside a tightly sealed **double** bag or wrapped in polythene sheeting. If using the site at Princes Drive, Leamington Spa, for asbestos disposal, you should contact a member of staff on arrival at the site. **Please note that no more than 3 sheets of asbestos cement can be disposed of at the waste site in any one month, and they must fit in the boot of your car.** For advice on disposal of asbestos waste at council sites, telephone **Warwickshire County Council Waste Management** on: **(01926) 412593.**

If you have no means of transporting asbestos waste, or have large quantities of asbestos, or require other related services, contact details for some local companies are provided on page 15 of this booklet. **The local authorities do not endorse any of the companies listed, and cannot be held responsible for services provided.** Alternatively, you may wish to consult the Asbestos Removal section of the **Yellow Pages** for licensed contractors in your area who can dispose of asbestos waste. A list of licensed contractors is also available on the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) website listed on page 13 of this booklet.

NOTE: The use of a third party, ie builder, to dismantle and dispose of household asbestos material would be designated as "trade waste" and cannot be disposed of at a council site. Arrangements should be made with a licensed contractor for disposal, or contact the Environment Agency for further information on safe disposal.

### Dumped asbestos

Fly-tipping puts others at serious risk, especially children.

If you see what may be asbestos dumped anywhere in your area, please contact your local **Environmental Health Department** or the **Environment Agency** (contact details on page 14 of this booklet). They can then arrange to have the material inspected and will take the appropriate action.

## The three main types of 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.

**There is no "safe level" of exposure to asbestos**



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.

**Where asbestos containing materials may be 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**

**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
- Floor finish** – Cushionfloor sheet vinyl
- Floor tiles** – rigid vinyl
- Floor tiles** – thermoplastic vinyl



**Precautions to take when removing asbestos cement products**

In your garden there may be an old shed that you inherited or built many years ago. Some sheds contain asbestos cement sheeting to the roof or walls. If you wish to carry out any work to a shed or garage, follow the simple guidelines below.

- Wear a dust mask approved for asbestos (CE marked to EN 149 standard with FFP2 filters)
- Wear a disposable overall and dispose of it with the waste
- Keep other people away from the working area, and ensure people do not smoke, eat or drink in the work area
- Dampen or spray the material well with water containing a little washing up liquid (provided there is no contact with electricity)

- Remove asbestos panels or materials in whole pieces. **DO NOT** break or disturb the asbestos material unless absolutely necessary. If you need to break it up, use hand tools only, not power tools

**Irresponsible or inappropriate DIY work on asbestos materials in the home can lead to:**

**People's health being put at risk**

**Contamination to the home**

**Contamination of the family vacuum cleaner**



## Asbestos do's and don'ts

Make regular checks of any material that you think contains asbestos. Don't touch it but look for signs of wear and tear, 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.

- Do keep activities to an absolute minimum in any areas where damaged material may contain asbestos.
- Do take every precaution to avoid damaging or disturbing asbestos-containing material.
- Do not use power tools to drill, sand or saw asbestos-containing material.
- Do not dust or sweep debris that may contain asbestos.
- Do not trample dust or mess that may contain asbestos through the house.

- If areas within the home do become contaminated with asbestos dust, **DO NOT VACUUM IT UP** using a domestic vacuum cleaner. 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.

Instead, hire an industrial vacuum cleaner that meets standard BS 5415 (Type H)

- Do have removal and repair of asbestos-containing material done by people trained and qualified in handling asbestos. We suggest that qualified and established companies also carry out sampling and condition reports
- Where asbestos materials are in good condition, rigid, and there is no risk of the material becoming damaged, you can seal them to prevent dust escaping. Surface dust should be removed by damping down with a wet cloth or spray. Emulsion paint should be painted on insulating board and alkali-resistant primer or coating should be used on asbestos cement.

### External structure

**Roof cladding** – numerous brands and types

**Roof slates**

**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

**Fire surrounds** – heat and fire proof

**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**

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

**Window cill** – black cast resin sheet from the manufacturer Eternit

## 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. Asbestos is no longer used in goods such as toasters, hair dryers, gas and solid fuel appliances that conform to a British Standard.

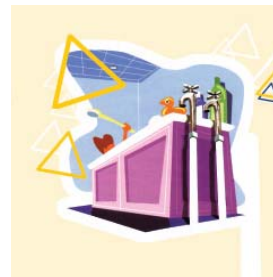
**Loft or cavity wall insulation does not contain asbestos**

## 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.

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 (opposite).

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.



Home owners / occupiers who are planning home improvements or maintenance in properties that may contain asbestos, should first contact their local authority for further advice.



**Very few items that contain asbestos actually carry this label**