



What Should Be Done About Asbestos In The Home?

If you think asbestos may be in your home, do not panic! Usually the best thing is to LEAVE asbestos material that is in good condition ALONE. Generally, material in good condition will not release asbestos fibers.

A material with more than 1% asbestos fibers is considered positive for asbestos.

These Asbestos Containing Material, ACM, fall into two general categories, Friable and Non-friable.

Non-friable material does not become air borne unless it is pulverized by drilling, sawing or grinding the material. The most obvious example is floor tile and transite siding. Non-friable material is generally removed when there is a tear down or major remodel. Non-friable floor tile can be encapsulated with additional flooring such as carpet or wood floor.

Friable material is prone to become air borne and therefore be ingested through breathing. An example is the insulation around steam pipes and boilers.

In the case of Friable Material: Do not touch it, but look for signs of wear or damage such as tears, abrasions, or water damage. Damaged material may release asbestos fibers. This is particularly true if you often disturb it by hitting, rubbing, or handling it, or if it is exposed to extreme vibration or airflow.

If asbestos material is more than slightly damaged, or if you are going to make changes in your home that might disturb it, repair or removal by a professional is needed. Before you have your house remodeled, find out whether asbestos materials are present.

If the asbestos material is in good shape and will not be disturbed, do nothing! If it is a problem, there are two types of corrections: repair and removal.

REPAIR usually involves either sealing or covering asbestos material. Sealing (encapsulation) involves treating the material with a sealant that either binds the asbestos fibers together or coats the material so fibers are not released. Pipe, furnace, and boiler insulation can sometimes be repaired this way. Only a professional trained to handle asbestos safely should do this.

Covering (enclosure) involves placing something over or around the material that contains asbestos to prevent release of fibers. Call an expert for this work.

Asbestos Do's and Don'ts for the Homeowner

Do keep activities to a minimum in any areas having damaged material that may contain asbestos.

Do take every precaution to avoid damaging asbestos material.

Do have removal and major repair done by people trained and qualified in handling asbestos. It is highly recommended that sampling and minor repair also be done by asbestos professionals.

Do not dust, sweep, or vacuum debris that may contain asbestos.

Do not saw, sand, scrape, or drill holes in asbestos materials.

Do not use abrasive pads or brushes on power strippers to strip wax from asbestos flooring? Never use a power stripper on a dry floor.

Do not sand or try to level asbestos flooring or its backing. When asbestos flooring needs replacing, install new floor covering over it, if possible.

Do not track material that could contain asbestos through the house. If you cannot avoid walking through the area, have it cleaned with a wet mop. If the material is from a damaged area, or if a large area must be cleaned, call an asbestos professional.

Major repairs must be done only by a professional trained in methods for safely handling asbestos. Professionals should also do minor repairs since there is always a risk of exposure to fibers when asbestos is disturbed.

Doing minor repairs yourself is not recommended since improper handling of asbestos materials can create a hazard where none existed.

If you nevertheless choose to do minor repairs, you should have as much information as possible on the handling of asbestos before doing anything. Contact your state or local health department or regional EPA office for information about asbestos training programs in your area. Your local school district may also have information about asbestos professionals and training programs for school buildings. Even if you have completed a training program, do not try anything more than minor repairs. Before undertaking minor repairs, carefully examine the area around the damage to make sure it is stable.

As a general matter, any damaged area which is bigger than the size of your hand is not a minor repair.

Asbestos Do's and Don'ts for the Homeowner

Before undertaking minor repairs, be sure to follow all the precautions described earlier for sampling asbestos material. Always wet the asbestos material using a fine mist of water containing a few drops of detergent. Commercial products designed to fill holes and seal damaged areas are available. Wrapping a special fabric, such as rewet table glass cloth around it can cover small areas of material such as pipe insulation. These products are available from stores (listed in the telephone directory under Safety Equipment and Clothing), which specialize in asbestos materials and safety items.

REMOVAL is usually the most expensive method and, unless required by state or local regulations, should be the last option considered in most situations. This is because removal poses the greatest risk of fiber release. However, removal may be required when remodeling or making major changes to your home that will disturb asbestos material. In addition, removal may be called for if asbestos material is damaged extensively and cannot be otherwise repaired.

Asbestos removal is a negotiated issue in a residential transaction. REMOVAL may be required by a buyer in a residential transaction.

Removal is complex and must be done only by a contractor with special training. Improper removal may actually increase the health risks to you and your family.

Caution!

Do not dust, sweep, or vacuum debris that may contain asbestos. These steps will disturb tiny asbestos fibers and may release them into the air. Remove dust by wet mopping or with a special HEPA vacuum cleaner used by trained asbestos contractors.