

Asbestos

INFORMATION SHEET

This information has been provided by the Government of Western Australia Department of Communities.

WHAT IS ASBESTOS?

Asbestos is a naturally occurring, fibrous, crystalline mineral found in rock formations. Three main types of asbestos have been mined in Australia:

- crocidolite (blue asbestos)
- amosite (brown asbestos)
- chrysotile (white asbestos)

WHEN WAS ASBESTOS USED?

Asbestos cement materials were first manufactured in the 1920s and were commonly used in residential buildings from the 1940s to the 1980s. Many houses built before 1990 contain asbestos products but only some built in the 1990s and early 2000s do.

WHEN WAS ASBESTOS BANNED?

In Australia, the use and import of blue and brown asbestos was banned in the mid-1980s and the manufacture or import of white asbestos was banned in December 2003.

WHERE CAN YOU FIND ASBESTOS IN THE HOME?

Asbestos fibres may be present in a number of products previously used in homes including:

- roofing and shingles
- exterior and interior wall cladding
- fencing
- thermal boards around fireplaces
- backing material on floor tiles and vinyl flooring

- asbestos-rope door gaskets in wood stoves
- textured paints and decorative ceiling coatings
- insulation used on hot water pipes, domestic heaters and stoves.

HOW DO YOU RECOGNISE ASBESTOS PRODUCTS?

It is difficult to determine if a material contains asbestos simply by looking at it, but an examination by a qualified Housing officer can verify its presence. If in doubt, treat suspect material as though it does contain asbestos.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

When asbestos fibres are breathed in, they remain deep within the lungs and cause inflammation and scarring. Exposure can also cause asbestosis, pleural plaque, lung cancer and mesothelioma, which usually take many years or decades to develop. The risk of developing an asbestos-related disease depends on the total number of fibres inhaled.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I SEE NEWLY DAMAGED OR DISTURBED ASBESTOS?

It is vital that you immediately report any damaged or disturbed asbestos to your Housing Coordinator or the Property Services Team on 1300 895 205.

More information about asbestos in the home is available in 'Asbestos: A Guide for Householders and the General Public' available from the Australian Government Department of Health at www.health.gov.au.