

Asbestos

in the home



May 2011

Introduction

This leaflet deals with the subject of asbestos, what it is, where it may be found and how Spire Homes deals with it.

Asbestos

Asbestos is a naturally occurring mineral fibre. As it is flexible and fire-resistant it was used in a number of building products to strengthen them and provide insulation and fire protection. Asbestos cement was commonly used as a cladding material. However, owing to health concerns over its use, properties built since the mid 1980s are unlikely to contain asbestos.

Identification of Asbestos Materials

There are three main types of asbestos that may be found in housing. These are commonly called blue asbestos (crocidolite), brown asbestos (amosite) and white asbestos (chrysotile).

It is impossible to tell whether a material contains asbestos just by looking at it. This can only be confirmed by a laboratory test. Since 1976 British manufacturers have put labels on their products to show that they contain asbestos, and since 1986 all products containing asbestos carry a special European label.

Health

As asbestos is a naturally occurring product there have always been fibres in the air, although only at a low level. This 'background level' is unlikely to pose any health risk.

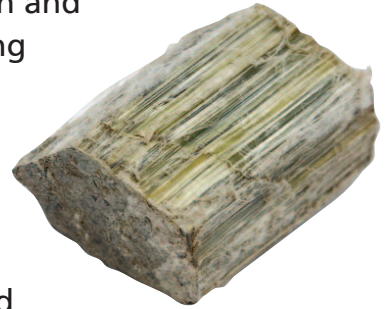
In the same way, asbestos material found in the home should not pose a health hazard provided it is in sound condition. However, when asbestos materials become damaged (for example by being drilled, sanded, sawn or scrubbed) there is a chance that they may release fibres into the air. If these fibres are breathed in they may lodge in the lung causing possible lung damage. If large quantities of fibres are inhaled over a long period there is a risk of lung diseases such as asbestosis, mesothelioma and other cancers.



Location of Asbestos

Any building built up to the mid 1980s may contain asbestos materials. Asbestos materials are usually found in the following:

Insulating board. Used for fire protection and insulation, it is sometimes found in ceiling tiles, on the back of cupboard doors, as wall lining, panels and partitions, particularly in system built housing of the 1960s and 1970s.



Lagging. Used for insulation of pipes and boilers: again used in 1960s and 1970s system built properties, but usually in boiler houses rather than homes themselves.

Sprayed coating. Generally used for fire protection around the core of a building (lift shafts for example) its use stopped in 1974 and the spraying of asbestos has been banned since 1986.

Asbestos cement products. The most widely used asbestos material, it can appear in roofing and wall cladding, ceiling lining, partition board, bath panels, fire surrounds, pipes, cold water tanks, guttering and drain pipes. Asbestos cement products are stable and are unlikely to release fibres unless subject to damage, decay or weathering.

Miscellaneous items. Examples include textured wall and ceiling finishes, floor tiles, toilet cisterns, roofing felt, ropes and blankets, some warm air heating systems, early storage heaters (up to 1976) early coal-effect fires, and domestic items such as oven gloves, ironing boards and fire blankets.

What We Do

We acknowledge the serious health hazards associated with exposure to asbestos fibres. Spire Homes accepts its responsibility under current and future legislation to protect its tenants and any other persons who may be at risk from asbestos in our properties.

We will undertake to fulfil our duties by reducing the exposure to asbestos of our tenants and of any other persons who may be exposed to asbestos within Spire's homes, so far as is reasonably practicable.

To do this, Spire Homes will:

- Carry out surveys to identify asbestos containing materials in all Spire Homes owned properties including other buildings e.g. garages
- Put together and maintain a comprehensive asbestos register of where asbestos can be found in homes
- Develop and put into practice, measures to manage any risks arising from materials containing asbestos and make sure that these measures are carried out
- Provide information about where materials containing asbestos can be found and the condition of the material to tenants and any other people who may be exposed to asbestos within Spire's owned homes
- Make sure anyone who is likely to disturb materials containing asbestos including staff, contractors and tenants know about the risks and take the appropriate actions and precautions.

It is not reasonable or necessary for Spire to remove all asbestos materials from every building. If the asbestos material is in good condition and cannot easily be damaged it is best left alone.

If the asbestos material is slightly damaged (or in a position where there is a chance it might be damaged) it will be sealed or encapsulated.

Any materials that are badly damaged or deteriorating will be removed. If you think you have any materials that fall under this category please contact us.

What You Should Do

You should not remove or work on asbestos materials yourself. Unsupervised removal may release fibres into the air. If you believe there is any damage or deterioration to existing asbestos materials you should let us know.

Please try not to disturb or damage asbestos materials that are in good condition and never try to take apart any products containing asbestos.

If you have asbestos materials in your home take extra care if you intend to carry out any DIY; do not drill, cut, scrape, sand or disturb asbestos materials. If you are employing contractors yourself you should make them aware of the existence of any asbestos you know about in your home. If you are in any doubt please contact Spire Homes for advice.

Please contact:

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Spire Homes, 1 Crown Court, Crown Way, Rushden,
Northamptonshire NN10 6BS. Tel: **0845 603 5399**

Rutland Office:

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This leaflet is available in various formats, i.e. different languages, braille, audio formats etc. Please contact us for further information.



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