

Asbestos – What you need to know

What is asbestos?

Asbestos is a naturally occurring mineral. Its fibres are strong and resistant to heat and chemicals, this has led to their use in a wide range of building materials and products, often as fireproofing.

Where is asbestos found?

Any buildings constructed prior to 2000 have the potential to contain Asbestos materials.

As asbestos has been used in a number of building materials there is the potential for it to be present in surfaces throughout buildings such as:

- internal rooms -ceiling, wall, floor and service risers
- internal fittings – tanks, pipes, electrics, heating
- internal attics – firebreak, insulation, flues
- external areas/ fittings – roof, windows, guttering

The main building materials containing asbestos are given below:

- a) Insulation Board – This has been used for fire protection, heat and sound insulation.
- b) Lagging – This has been used for the thermal insulation of pipes and boilers (This is very rarely found in homes).
- c) Sprayed Coating – This was used for fire protection of structural steel and condensation protection.
- d) Cement Products – This is the most commonly used asbestos material. It is found in different types of buildings as roofing sheets, wall cladding, partition boards, bath surrounds, roofing tiles and slates.
- e) Textured coating – commonly known as “Artex” which can be used for ceiling and walls.
- f) “Vinyl products – these are most commonly found in flooring materials.
- g) Heat resistant household items – ironing boards

Please refer to the asbestos building diagram at the end of this leaflet. This leaflet and diagram is a guide to the most common uses and locations of asbestos in housing. It is unlikely that your home contains asbestos in all potential locations Identified.



How can I identify products or materials containing asbestos?

Since 1976 British manufacturers have put labels on their products to show that they contain asbestos and European countries followed this example in 1986.

Note: - these labels may not always be visible.

Unfortunately not all materials are labelled and testing by an accredited company may be required.

Take Care when doing DIY!

If you have asbestos materials in your home, you must always take extra care when doing any DIY. The following precautions should always be taken:

- **never** attempt work at locations where there is sprayed asbestos, lagging or insulating boards – this must be undertaken by a specialist contractor.
- do not drill, cut or disturb
- do not scrape or sand asbestos material before painting or decorating. Some types of asbestos material are soft and can release large numbers of fibres if rubbed or scraped.

To keep risk to a minimum, you must follow these simple guidelines:

- you **MUST** obtain permission from the Council prior to undertaking any DIY works in the property
- follow the precautions above when carrying out any DIY work for which you have permission
- seek advice or guidance from your housing officer if you are unclear or uncertain about what you can or should do

Why might asbestos be a problem?

Asbestos materials present in housing do not generally put those living there at risk.

When asbestos materials age or become damaged they may release fibres into the air. These can be breathed into the lungs, and where there are very high levels of these fibres, lung diseases can be a risk. -This may pose a risk to health if these fibres are breathed in.

Asbestos containing materials which are in good condition and enclosed, covered, painted and left undisturbed pose no risk to occupants of the property.

Tel: 01506 280000

Email: customer.service@westlothian.gov.uk

Asbestos – What you need to know

What is West Lothian Council doing?

West Lothian Council has an Asbestos Policy and Management plan in place to ensure the safety of their tenants and employees.

A dedicated Asbestos Compliance Team assists Housing Customer and Building Services in all aspects of asbestos management in Council properties.

Houses are subject to asbestos inspections when:

- A house becomes void.
- A house is included in the capital improvement programme.
- A house requires an alteration or repair.

These programmes are allowing us to collect information on our housing stock for future use.

Where Asbestos is identified, it may be necessary for the Council to undertake remedial or removal works. When this is the case we will inform you of the work to be undertaken and on progress during the works.

How should I dispose of asbestos?

- Council Tenants **MUST** not attempt to dispose of asbestos, arrangements must be made to have specialist undertake removal and disposal of asbestos material.
- West Lothian Council tenants should contact the Council on 01506 280000 for advice and assistance.

Owner / occupiers should seek their own advice and it is recommended that they contact an appropriately qualified specialist private contractor to undertake any asbestos related works, including disposal of asbestos material

What should I do if I suspect there is asbestos in my home?

Any asbestos materials that are in good condition and that cannot easily be damaged are best left where they are as their removal can lead to higher levels of fibres in the air. It is a good idea to check the condition of these materials from time to time to make sure that they have not become damaged or have started to deteriorate.

Any Council tenant who thinks there may be asbestos in their home and is concerned about its condition should contact us and we will arrange to have an inspection made of the area. Please contact your Local Office via the Contact centre to arrange an inspection.

In the event of an emergency repair, the tenant should report this via the contact centre or out of hours emergency contact number. Please close the door to the affected area of the house and arrangements will be made for an assessment to be carried out.

Following inspection, asbestos sampling, remediation and removal may be undertaken by Council approved contractors.

In certain circumstances, it may be sufficient to carry out repair to the affected materials. The Council will determine whether repair or replacement is necessary and arrange works as appropriate.

If you are a council tenant and are planning an improvement or alteration to your home you **MUST** obtain the Councils permission prior to starting any work. Contact your Housing Officer with the details. Please consult your tenant handbook for more details on Safety in Your Home.

Owner/occupiers should appoint their own suitably qualified contractor to repair or remove asbestos materials. Please refer the HSE website <http://www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/> for further guidance.

Remember....

- avoid damaging asbestos materials
- asbestos material in good condition should be left alone
- if you think you have products containing asbestos in your home, seek advice before you take any action
- only undertake DIY works to your home if you have obtained the councils prior permission

Please refer to your tenant handbook for more information on "Safety in Your Home".

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Asbestos - where it can be found

Inside

- A. Asbestos cement Water tank
- B. Pipe lagging
- C. Loose fill insulation
- D. Textured decorative coating eg artex
- E. AIB ceiling tiles
- F. AIB bath panel
- G. Toilet seat and cistern
- H. AIB behind fuse box
- I. AIB airing cupboard and/or sprayed insulation coating boiler
- J. AIB partition wall
- K. AIB interior window panel

L. AIB around boiler

M. Vinyl floor tiles

N. AIB behind fire

Outside

O. Gutters and Asbestos cement downpipes

P. Soffits – AIB or asbestos cement

Q. AIB exterior window panel

R. Asbestos cement roof

S. Asbestos cement panels

T. Roofing felt

AIB = Asbestos Insulating Board

