

How can I identify products or materials containing asbestos?

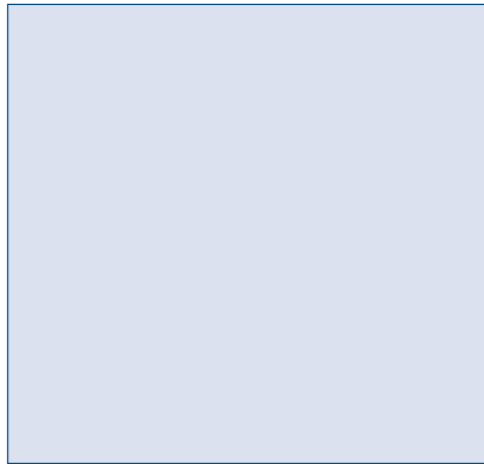
Generally, it is not possible for the average person to be able to recognise materials containing asbestos. It needs people with specific skills and experience to do this and even then, only a laboratory test can positively identify whether or not a material contains asbestos.

Remember, products containing asbestos can look very similar to those that do not contain asbestos - if in doubt SEEK ADVICE.

What is Crawley Homes doing about the problem?

Crawley Homes acknowledges the serious health hazards associated with exposure to asbestos fibres. The council accepts its responsibility under current and future legislation to protect its tenants and any other persons who may be at risk from asbestos in council owned homes.

The council will undertake to fulfill its duties by reducing the exposure, to asbestos, of its tenants and of any other persons who may be exposed to asbestos within council owned homes, so far as is reasonably practicable.



Asbestos in your home

This leaflet aims to address any concerns and questions you may have about asbestos in your home. It will explain what asbestos is, why it might be a problem, where it could be found and what Crawley Homes is doing.



Front page pictures are examples showing where asbestos might be found.

What is asbestos?

Asbestos is a mineral fibre that is strong and resistant to heat and chemicals. This has led to the use of asbestos fibres in a wide range of building materials and products, often as fireproofing. Homes built since the mid-1980s are very unlikely to contain asbestos in the fabric of the building. Homes built after 1990 are extremely unlikely to contain asbestos anywhere in the building. Asbestos cement has been widely used as a cladding material and can still be found in garages and sheds.

Asbestos can be found in all types of property including housing, commercial and industrial buildings, in both the private and public sectors.

Why may asbestos be a problem?

When asbestos materials age or become damaged they can release fibres into the air. These can be breathed deep into the lung where they may stay for a long time, causing possible damage. When very high levels of these fibres are breathed in, there is a risk of lung diseases, including cancer.

People who have worked with asbestos for many years as part of their job or have washed the dusty clothing of those who worked with asbestos are most likely to be affected. Workplace regulations now protect such people.

Is everyone exposed to asbestos?

There is a very low level of fibres in the air everywhere because asbestos has been used widely. Exposure to this low level of fibres is unlikely to harm people's health. Levels of fibres may be higher in buildings containing asbestos materials, especially where the materials have been damaged.

It is very unlikely that the levels of asbestos fibres found in any building will be harmful, but if you think you have damaged asbestos materials in your home, you should seek advice on the appropriate action to take.

High, short-term exposures to asbestos fibres can occur during 'Do-it-yourself' work. For this reason, do not work on materials that may contain asbestos, and especially avoid sanding or drilling.

The following section covers the areas where asbestos might be found, however if you are unsure please contact Crawley Homes' Asbestos Team at the Town Hall on (01293) 438429.

Where is asbestos found?

Building materials containing asbestos were widely used from 1930 to around 1980, particularly from the 1950s onwards. Therefore, houses and flats built or refurbished at that time may contain asbestos materials.

Asbestos has also been used in some heat-resistant household products, such as oven gloves and ironing boards. The use of asbestos in these products decreased greatly around the mid-1980s and since 1993, the use of asbestos in most products has been banned.

It is not always easy to tell whether a product contains asbestos, as modern, asbestos-free materials often look similar, remember it is usually older products that contain asbestos.

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

The types of asbestos materials that may be found in homes are described below.

- **Insulating board** (Asbestos content 20-45%)
Insulating board has been used for fire protection, heat and sound insulation. It is particularly common in 1950s and 1970s system-built housing and is found in materials such as ducts, infill panels, ceiling tiles, wall linings, bath panels and partitions. It is less likely to be found in buildings constructed after 1982.
- **Asbestos lagging** (Asbestos content 55-100%)
Asbestos lagging has been used for thermal insulation of pipes and boilers. It was widely used in public buildings and system-built flats during the 1950s to early 1970s in areas such as boiler houses and heating plants. Asbestos lagging is very rarely found in homes, especially those constructed after the mid 1970s. The use of asbestos for thermal insulation was banned in 1985.

Asbestos board found next to a gas meter.

- **Sprayed coating** (Asbestos content 55-85%)
Sprayed asbestos coatings were used for fire protection of structural steel and are commonly found in system-built flats built during the 1950s. The coatings were mainly applied around the core of the building such as service ducts, lift shafts, etc. Use stopped in 1974 and the spraying of asbestos has been prohibited since 1985. Sprayed asbestos has since been removed from many buildings, or sealed to prevent fibres being released.
- **Asbestos-cement products** (Asbestos content mainly 10-15%, but sometimes up to 40%)
Asbestos-cement is the most widely used asbestos material. It is found in many types of building as profiled sheets for roofing and wall-cladding, in flat sheets and partition boards for linings to walls and ceilings, in bath panels, soffit boards, fire surrounds, flue pipes, cold-water tanks and as roofing tiles and slates. It has been commonly used as roofing and cladding for garages and sheds and also in guttering and drainpipes. Its use has declined since 1975. Asbestos cement products are unlikely to release high levels

of fibres because of the way they are made, unless they are subject to extreme abrasion. Damage from weathering may also release a small amount of fibres.

- **Other building materials and products**
Asbestos has been used in a variety of other building materials, for example, in decorative coatings such as textured paints and plasters. These are still widely in place but supply and application has been prohibited since 1988. Plastic floor tiles, cushion flooring, roofing felts, tapes, ropes, felts and blankets can also contain asbestos.
- **Heating appliances and domestic equipment**
Asbestos was used in some warm air heating systems, electric storage heaters (up to 1975) and some early 'coal effect' gas fires. It has also been used in domestic equipment, such as oven gloves and ironing boards, seals on cooker doors and fire blankets. Asbestos has also been used in brake linings and pads.