

Introduction

Dear Reader,

With any home renovation project it is important to take appropriate steps to ensure the health and safety of you and your family. With asbestos present in most Australian homes built before the end of the 1980s it poses a significant health risk to any home renovator.

I am pleased to provide you with this excerpt from my book *Identifying Asbestos in Your Home*. With a rise in the number of DIY home renovators this brochure will help Australians identify asbestos hazards and understand the possible consequences of asbestos exposure.

Asbestos is found in the most unexpected and unlikely of places. One memorable encounter for me was in a large public mall shoe repair premise where I found a shoe repairer using a roll of asbestos felt as an insert in shoes to remove odours. Remember outdoor items such as cubby houses, dog kennels and barbeque areas are often made with leftover building materials including asbestos.

We are often approached too late by families who have inadvertently exposed themselves to a large dose of asbestos when renovating. As you will see in this brochure, exposure to asbestos can have significant health consequences including death.

Please, if you are planning a renovation, treat asbestos as you would treat electrical or plumbing work—it is a specialised process. If you are planning to disturb asbestos get it removed by an appropriately qualified asbestos removalist.

This brochure is a snap shot for identifying asbestos around the home—it only highlights some of the key areas where asbestos can be found.

I hope this brochure raises your awareness of asbestos when renovating your home.

Yours faithfully,
Brian Sketcher

Finding more information

Visit
www.asbestos-audits.com.au
for more information on
Identifying asbestos in your home.



For further information regarding asbestos in your state or territory please refer to the below websites and contact numbers.

Australian Government – Department of Health and Ageing
www.health.gov.au
1800 020 103

ACT
www.asbestos.act.gov.au/home_owners
13 22 81

NSW
www.nsw.gov.au/fibro
13 10 50

NT
www.health.nt.gov.au/Environmental_Health/Asbestos_Management/index.aspx
08 8922 7152

QLD
www.deir.qld.gov.au/asbestos/
13 74 68

SA
www.safework.sa.gov.au
1300 365 255

TAS
www.asbestos.tas.gov.au/
1300 366 322

VIC
www.health.vic.gov.au/environment/home/asbestos.htm
1300 761 874

WA
www.public.health.wa.gov.au/3/1143/2/asbestos_in_the_home.pm
08 9399 4999

Identifying asbestos in your home

Minister’s foreword



Every weekend, thousands of Australians roll up the sleeves and get stuck into projects to maintain and improve their number one investment – their home.

But the difficult reality is that this can also pose a serious danger to their health.

Amid the accepted DIY dangers of power tools and falls from ladders lurks asbestos, a building material that was widely used in Australia until the 1990s—and wasn’t fully banned until 2003.

Most of us are aware of the tragic deaths of workers exposed to asbestos many years ago, but many Australians unfortunately believe asbestos no longer poses a danger.

However, an estimated 30,000 to 40,000 Australians will be diagnosed with asbestos related disease over the next 20 years, and researchers, policy makers and myself as one of the responsible ministers fear a third wave of asbestos deaths from people exposed in the home.

This brochure, *Identifying Asbestos in your Home*, has been designed as a tool to help alert DIY renovators to potential areas in which asbestos may be found and what it may look like.

It has been adapted from a book by Brian Sketcher from Asbestos Audits Queensland, which was partially funded through the Federal Government’s Asbestos Innovation Fund. The Asbestos Innovation Fund is designed to develop practical programs to raise awareness of asbestos and improve its management and removal.

Before any home renovation, please take the time to ensure you are taking appropriate steps to protect yourself and your family.

If you are in any doubt at all, there are qualified asbestos removalists in every State and Territory.

Good luck with your DIY project, but please be sure to take care and protect yourself and those you love from accidental exposure to a silent killer.

Bill Shorten
Federal Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations



What is asbestos?

Asbestos is the name given to a group of six different fibrous minerals occurring naturally in our environment—amosite, chrysotile, crocidolite, and the fibrous varieties of tremolite, actinolite, and anthophyllite.

Asbestos is a naturally occurring mineral which had low treatment and refinement costs. Its unique properties of fire resistance, tensile strength, sound absorption, low electrical conductivity and chemical resistance made it a cheap and simple way to solve many material design problems relating to housing.

How does asbestos affect my health?

The main asbestos-related diseases are mesothelioma, asbestosis, pleural disease and cancer of the lung, larynx, and ovary. In addition, positive associations have been observed between exposure to all forms of asbestos and cancer of the pharynx, stomach, and colorectum. These diseases develop after a person inhales or ingests asbestos fibres. These diseases have the potential to cause significant health problems and even death.

Asbestos can pose a health risk when airborne fibres are generated either through degradation or high energy mechanical action—for example, drilling or sanding. The degree of asbestos fibre release, and inhalation or ingestion exposure, is partly dependent upon the type of material binding the asbestos, its general condition and the product type.

Friable asbestos poses a significant threat to human health. This type of asbestos material is usually soft and easily crumbles into a fine material or dust. Some examples include insulation or pipe lagging which easily become airborne, affecting the health of people working and living nearby.

All asbestos should be treated as potentially life threatening.

Appropriate removal of asbestos

If you're planning home renovations that will include removing or disturbing asbestos it is important that you engage a qualified asbestos removalist.

Asbestos removal courses are available in the various states and territories. These courses will provide additional information about safe work practices and disposal methods in your state or territory. For up to date information check with your local health and safety authority.

Frequently asked questions

How do I tell if it is asbestos?

The only definitive way to tell if it is asbestos is through sample analysis under microscopic examination. Fibrous cement sheeting made in the early 1980s with asbestos is visually identical to that made in the mid 1980s without asbestos. Vinyl tiles and sealants often require further testing using x-ray diffraction or scanning electron microscopy to confirm asbestos content.

Does asbestos have to be removed?

When you are planning renovations removal of asbestos containing materials by an appropriately licenced and trained company is recommended. If the building was constructed pre 1984 it will have asbestos in it. If it was constructed 1984—1990 there is still a chance of asbestos, particularly various forms of pipe and formwork.

Do I need to have my house inspected before I start renovating?

Before renovating or planning to renovate you should have your house inspected for asbestos.

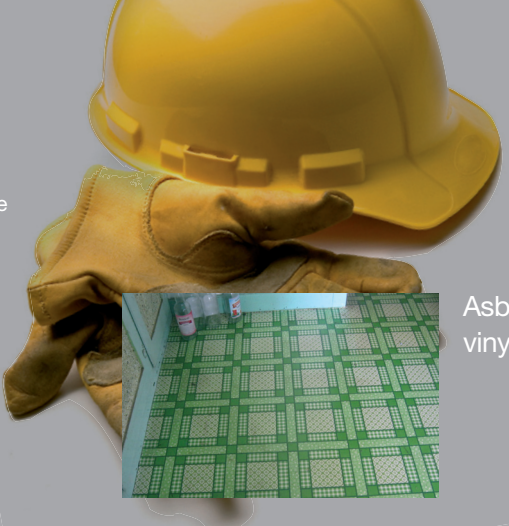


Where is asbestos in my home?

If your house was built before the 1990s it is likely to contain some form of asbestos material or product unless it has been removed.

The following photos are examples of what asbestos in your home may look like. These images only show some of the key areas in your home where you may find different types of asbestos. Asbestos was used all around the home for a variety of purposes—not all are covered in this brochure.

Not all forms of asbestos need to be removed but when you are planning renovations it is important that you consult an appropriately qualified professional.



Asbestos backed vinyl in a kitchen.



Asbestos cement sheet eaves lining.



Removal of tiles next to the dishwasher has revealed asbestos cement wall lining.



Simulated brick asbestos cement sheet cladding – moulded slices of brick attached to asbestos cement sheeting.



Laminated asbestos cement sheet splash back panel to a sink.



Asbestos cement sheet walls in a toilet.



Very poor surfaces of corrugated asbestos cement roof with asbestos debris loose on the roof and in the gutter.



Asbestos woven rope still on a section of hot water pipe leading to a new hot water service unit.



Old Garage: with asbestos cement walls and roof.