

About **Asbestos**

BUILDING MANAGEMENT ACCOMMODATION AND PROPERTY SERVICES – EMPLOYEE HOUSING SERVICE



Government of South Australia

Department for Transport,
Energy and Infrastructure

About Asbestos

Where are asbestos products most likely to be found?

What are the risks?

Asbestos is a natural material, which was commonly used in building materials up until the 1980s, in wall and ceiling panelling, roofing, and floor tiles.

The presence of asbestos containing materials is not a problem in itself. However, safety issues do arise if the asbestos-containing material is disturbed or damaged.

While most people today are aware that asbestos can pose a health risk, they don't necessarily know where or how asbestos products may have been used in their homes – or the correct ways to deal with asbestos and minimise the risk.

Remember, you are not at risk if building material containing asbestos is not disturbed or if licensed contractors do work in accordance with the approved Codes of Practice. Unauthorised work by unskilled people puts you and others at risk.

This brochure provides the basic information you need to identify possible asbestos products, some simple rules to follow, and where to go for further information and assistance if required.

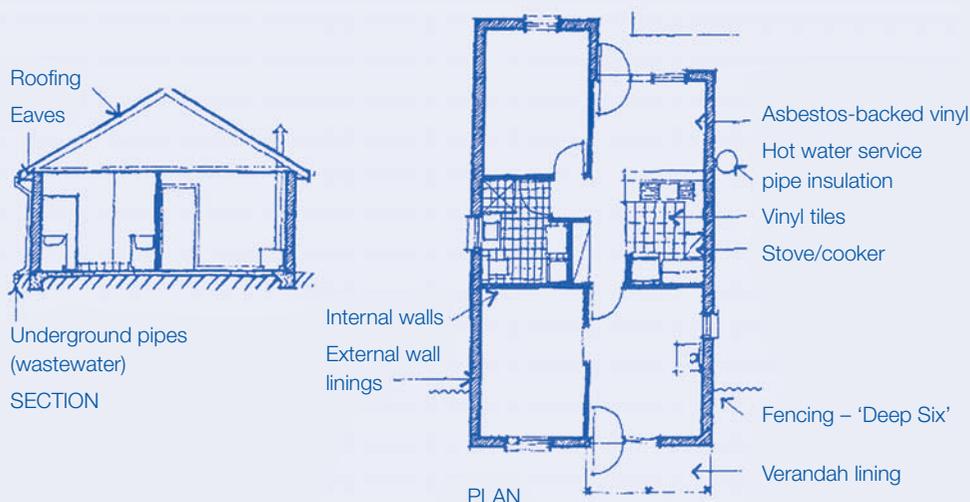
The most common uses for asbestos products include:

- internal and external wall lining or splashboards in kitchens and 'wet areas' such as bathrooms, toilets and laundries;
- vinyl floor tiles and the backing for vinyl sheeting (unlikely in Building Management Accommodation and Property Services (BMAPS) houses as floor covering is replaced regularly);
- lagging (rope insulation) attached to hot water services entering wall lining
- in eaves, gables and roofing including roofing shingles;
- down pipes and heater flue pipes;
- in and around external structures, eg sheds, fencing, rainwater tank stands.

The quick reference guide on the back page of this brochure provides a list of common asbestos products and activities that may cause risk.

Asbestos containing products do not pose a health risk if they are in good condition and remain undisturbed. They only become a health risk if their condition deteriorates or if they are damaged or disturbed in some way. Activities such as sawing, sanding, drilling or breaking up products containing asbestos can release the asbestos fibres that pose the health risk.

Common Locations of Asbestos in Houses



What should I do about asbestos products in or around my home?

Government policies and guidelines

If you suspect, or have identified, the presence of asbestos containing materials in or around the property you occupy, there are some simple guidelines to follow. If you're not sure if a material or product contains asbestos, always treat it as if it does.

If you have general questions about asbestos...

If you have concerns about the possibility of asbestos in your home, or a general query about asbestos, contact your local BMAPS Housing Manager.

If the building material is in good condition...

If the building material appears to be sound (ie no damage, crumbling or damp) and there's no reason to disturb it, there should be no risk and it can be safely left alone. Disturbing the building material may create a risk where there was none.

If the building material is damaged or work needs to be done...

If you can see damage or disturbance to the building material, or there needs to be maintenance or repair work done in the area where the possible asbestos containing material is present, you need to inform the appropriate person to get it checked.

Private sector rental

If you are renting a property leased from the private market, contact your BMAPS Housing Manager.

Government owned housing

If it is a BMAPS house you need to inform your Facilities Manager at Building Management Facilities Services (BMFS).

Contact details are in your Tenancy Guide, on the web or available from your Housing Manager. Also:

- avoid the area, or keep activity in the area to a minimum, until the situation has been assessed and the problem fixed;
- do not dust, sweep or vacuum debris that might contain asbestos.

Once you have informed BMFS of the situation, it will arrange for a site inspection to assess the situation and carry out appropriate repairs or removal of the material.

Always follow these rules...

- DON'T ignore damage or deterioration – it needs to be assessed and the appropriate action taken.
- DON'T attempt to undertake any work yourself.
- DON'T allow unauthorised, non-accredited, unqualified people to undertake any work for you.

In accordance with the Residential Tenancy Agreement, all tenants are required to notify BMAPS of any damage to the property.

Tenants are also required to obtain the written consent of BMAPS before undertaking any renovation or alteration or addition to the property.

The South Australian Government is aware of its responsibility to its tenants, contractors and all those who could come into contact with asbestos in government-owned or leased properties and is committed to minimising the risk of harm from asbestos products. Accordingly, there are strict policies and guidelines in place regarding detection, assessment, monitoring, maintenance and removal of asbestos.

To find out more about Government's asbestos policies and guidelines and who to talk to about asbestos-related issues:

Contact your BMAPS Housing Manager or BMFS Manager.

Access information from the following websites:

- www.buildingmanagement.sa.gov.au
- www.safework.sa.gov.au

Quick reference guide

The examples below show the types of asbestos products you might encounter in or around your home and activities that might pose a risk. If unsure, contact your Housing Manager or your BMFS Facilities Manager. Details are in your Tenancy Guide or on the Web.

Asbestos product	Do not undertake these risk activities
Sheeting used for roofing, eaves, insulation, exterior and interior and interior wall linings	Sawing, cutting, drilling, sanding, breaking up, installing hooks, nails or similar
Fencing (eg 'Deep 6' fencing)	Breakage or accidental damage
Stormwater pipes, down pipes, hot water service and heater flues and lagging, boiler and furnace ducts	Damage or breakage, incorrect repair methods, removal
Vinyl asbestos, underlay material, backing adhesives used for installation, meter board mounting	Sanding or scraping sheet flooring backing during removal, drilling board mounting
Sheeting and paper used as insulation around fireplaces or wood-burning stoves	Repairing or removing heating appliances, cutting, tearing, sanding, sawing or drilling insulation

Frequently Asked Questions

Am I at risk from asbestos?

Most houses built before the late 1980s have some asbestos containing products, however you're not at risk from asbestos if the material is in good condition and is not disturbed.

What should I do if I think there is asbestos?

Contact your Housing Manager and discuss your concerns.

What do I do if building materials are damaged?

- Private sector rental:
Contact your BMAPS Housing Manager
- Government owned housing:
Contact your local BMFS Manager

Who is allowed to do work on my house?

Prequalified, licensed asbestos removal contractors shall carry out asbestos removal work. Appropriately licensed contractors shall undertake all other building and maintenance work.

Do I have to leave my house when it is inspected for asbestos?

There is no need to leave the property during an inspection, unless the contractor asks you to vacate for a specific purpose.

Do I have to leave if contractors are doing work on asbestos containing materials in my house?

Yes. You will be informed by either the BMAPS Housing Manager or the BMFS Facilities Manager. The cost will be borne BMAPS if overnight or longer relocation is required.

Will all the asbestos be removed from my house?

Not necessarily. If the asbestos containing material is not a health risk or is not likely to be damaged, it can be left as is.

Who undertakes the regular checks on houses to make sure there are no asbestos problems?

A competent person as described in the OHS&W Regulations 1995 will undertake inspections.

How often will my house be checked to make sure it is safe from asbestos?

An initial inspection of government owned properties for asbestos-containing materials will commence in 2005. This work will be undertaken by the Facilities Services Asbestos Management Unit. Once the initial inspection has been carried out, BMAPS and BMFS will inspect every 3 years. Upon vacancy properties will be inspected by the Key Agent for deterioration or damage, and any rectification work will be made before reletting.

Can I be allocated an 'asbestos free' house?

All BMAPS houses will be checked to ensure the asbestos containing materials do not pose a health risk.

Would I have to pay more for my house if it has been declared free of asbestos?

No, rents are based on market rates for that area.

For further information contact:

Building Management Accommodation and Property Services Adelaide Office
GPO Box 967 ADELAIDE SA 5001
Telephone (08) 8226 5496 Facsimile (08) 8226 5601
Website – www.buildingmanagement.sa.gov.au



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