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Information Sheet

Asbestos in your home



Asbestos in your home

Asbestos was used in many building materials prior to the 1980s because of its strength, fire resistance and insulating properties.

It is estimated that up to one third of all homes in Australia contain building materials that contain asbestos. As a general guideline, if your house was built or renovated: -

- before the mid-1980s, it is **highly** likely that it has some asbestos materials
- between the mid-1980s and 1990, it is **likely** that it has asbestos containing materials
- after 1990, it is **unlikely** that it has asbestos materials.

Although asbestos has not been used in domestic building materials since 1987 and the import and use of asbestos/asbestos containing materials was banned throughout Australia in 2003, there is still a significant amount of asbestos found in homes.

Typically, asbestos in your home can be found in two forms:

- Firmly bound fibres such as that found in flat or corrugated wall or roof cement sheeting
- Loose asbestos fibres (friable) such as that used in insulation products for hot water pipes, domestic heaters and ceiling insulation

Since 2003, it has been illegal to import, store, supply, sell, install, use or re-use asbestos containing materials. Cellulose fibres are now used instead of asbestos in building materials and non-asbestos fibres, such as glass, are now used in insulation products.

If you think you have found asbestos in your home, there are two things to remember: don't panic and don't disturb it.

Asbestos containing materials in your home only become a potential risk when they are

- Disturbed in such a way that it releases asbestos fibres or dust that contains asbestos fibres e.g. drilling, demolition, sanding, renovation work or cutting
- In such a poor or deteriorated condition causing the fibres to be released

Home renovations are now considered the biggest cause of the general public's exposure to asbestos fibres in Australia. Lack of awareness about the dangers of asbestos by do-it-yourself renovators is placing the future health of these people and their families at risk.

Historically, asbestos has been used to manufacture thousands of different building materials that may be present in your home. We strongly suggest that you have your home assessed for asbestos containing materials prior to undertaking any renovations.

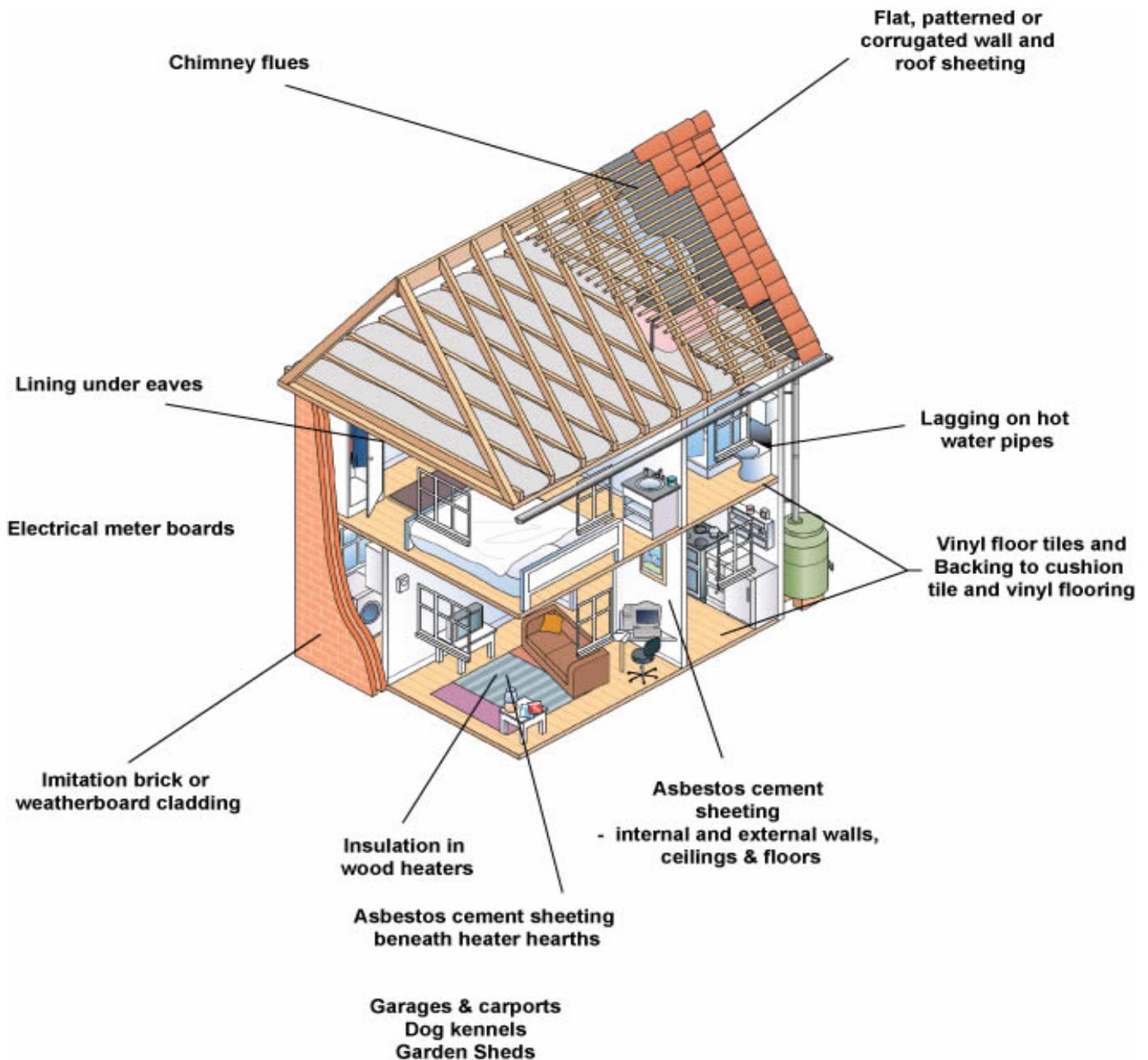
It is not always possible to identify the presence of asbestos just by looking at it. The only way to be certain is to have a sample analysed through an accredited laboratory. You should confirm the

presence (or otherwise) of asbestos in any materials you believe might contain asbestos before undertaking general maintenance renovation or demolition activities.

If the building material appears to be in good condition and unlikely to release fibres, then it can be left in place. This would be the case for tiles, floors and painted surfaces. If the surfaces have deteriorated and fibres are likely to become airborne or the material is going to be demolished, then assume it to be

asbestos or have the material tested by a registered hygienist

Remember, that it is hard to identify asbestos products in the home just by looking at them. Below is a diagram and a list that shows the potential location of asbestos products in a home built or renovated before 1990



Bathroom, toilet and laundry	Asbestos cement sheeting used in walls, ceilings and floors Hot water pipes set in to masonry walls Lagging on hot water pipes
Living areas	Insulation in wood heaters Asbestos cement sheeting beneath heater hearths
Kitchen	Vinyl or linoleum floor tiles Backing to cushion vinyl flooring Hot water pipes set into masonry walls
Exterior	Flat, patterned and corrugated wall and roof sheeting Imitation brick cladding Eaves
Backyard	Garden sheds Fences Garages and carports Dog kennels
Vehicles	Brake linings Clutch linings Adhesive products
Commercial buildings	Coating sprayed on beams for fireproofing Wrap on pipes and boilers Sheeting in roofs and walls
Other	Electrical meter boards Ironing board covers Heatproof mats

Please note, that if any building /demolition or renovation work is being done by a contractor (i.e. someone other than yourself as the owner) the site is deemed to be a workplace and Section 4.3 Asbestos) of Victoria's OHS Regulations apply. This regulation stipulates that any work with or removal of asbestos containing materials must be undertaken by a trained person, and, in most cases, by a licensed removalist.

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