



COMPLIANCE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Asbestos in My Home

A Home owners Guide to Managing Asbestos:

IMPORTANT: Improper removal or disposal of regulated asbestos-containing material can result in substantial civil penalties. This information is provided to help you avoid enforcement action.

ASBESTOS

Here's where to look:

Heating Systems

Many home heating appliances and heating systems contain asbestos insulation or gasket materials. It's common to find it as insulation on old furnaces and boilers, heating ducts and hot water pipes. It's also often found in insulating board materials installed

Spray-On "Popcorn" Ceilings

This heavy texture application was a common asbestos-containing ceiling treatment from the mid-60's to the mid-80's. It is extremely fragile and easily disturbed.

Vinyl Flooring

Sheet vinyl and tiles may contain asbestos if manufactured prior to the mid-80's. Sheet vinyl can be dangerous to remove because it may be backed with felt containing high concentrations of asbestos. Fibers may be released into the air if this backing is disturbed dry. Tiles are generally safer because asbestos fibers are bound up inside the tiles in a petroleum base.

Siding

Cement asbestos-board siding is a very dense, brittle product used primarily in the 40's, 50's and into the 60's.

Miscellaneous

Additional materials that may contain asbestos include "acoustical" ceiling tiles, plaster, stucco, knob and tube wire insulation and artificial fireplace logs and ashes.

Oh No! It's asbestos. Now, what do I do? *Don't panic. You have good options.*

1. Leave it alone: Remember, asbestos is a problem only if fibers are released into the air.

Asbestos-containing materials that are in good repair and not being disturbed will generally not release asbestos fibers. Hence, the safest, easiest and least expensive option may be to leave it alone.

Sometimes it is possible to work around asbestos without removing it. For example, rather than removing a sheet vinyl floor with asbestos backing, it may be possible to lay a new sheet vinyl on top of the old, or to install a new plywood underlayment on top of the existing and then the new sheet vinyl.

However, if the asbestos-containing material is damaged, likely to be damaged, or must be disturbed as part of a remodeling project, then you should repair, encapsulate or remove it.



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2. Repair & Encapsulate

Sometimes asbestos can be repaired or encapsulated rather than removed. A few inches of torn, loose or frayed asbestos tape-wrap on heating ducts can be sealed with paint or duct tape. Damaged hot water pipe insulation can be covered with a specially designed fabric available at safety equipment stores. Similarly, some asbestos applications that are in good condition can be encapsulated to stabilize them and reduce the likelihood of asbestos fiber releases. Encapsulation often is the best option when dealing with insulation on heating systems. There are two types of encapsulates. Penetrating encapsulates seep into asbestos-containing materials and bond with asbestos fibers.

They have little impact on the outward appearance of treated materials. Bridging encapsulating products, such as paint, coat asbestos containing materials with a more durable surface. They are most commonly used to encapsulate popcorn ceilings and heat duct insulation.

Home owners should be aware, however, that although encapsulation seems like an attractive option, especially when dealing with furnace ducts or sealing popcorn ceilings, there may be less obvious costs and risks involved. For example, painting may make future removal much more difficult. It can also cause heavy applications of popcorn ceilings to fall off in clumps.

In cases involving extensive asbestos damage or disturbance, removal may be the more appropriate option.

3. Removal

Hire an asbestos contractor -

If you decide to have asbestos removed, the YRCAA strongly encourages you to hire a state certified asbestos abatement contractor. These experts employ removal techniques unavailable to do-it-yourself home owners; thereby ensuring asbestos is effectively and safely removed. They also perform air monitoring to ensure that the air in your home meets acceptable standards after the project is complete.

Bonded, insured asbestos abatement contractors are in the yellow pages of your telephone directory under "Asbestos". Get several bids and check references before making a selection.

Do the work yourself?

Home owners may remove asbestos themselves, if they occupy the home where the work is to be done. Some projects can be done safely without using a certified contractor - **but only if prescribed work practices are strictly followed.**

Some projects, however, such as removal of asbestos insulation on furnaces, boilers and associated piping, are very hazardous and should be performed **only by a certified asbestos abatement contractor.**

Before planning an Asbestos project, call:

Yakima Regional Clean Air Agency (509) 834-2050

Yakima County Public Works (509) 574-2475 (for disposal information)



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Information is available to help you:

- ✓ Do the job within the law.
- ✓ Protect your health.
- ✓ Protect the health of others.
- ✓ Safely and lawfully dispose of the asbestos waste.

Know The Law:

The law requires that you submit a written Notification to the YRCAA ten days prior to the start of **any** activity that may cause asbestos to be disturbed.

The law requires that you utilize certain work methods and/or controls to minimize the potential for asbestos fiber release.

The law requires that you package and dispose of asbestos in a certain manner.

What is asbestos, anyway?

Asbestos is a naturally occurring mineral fiber that has been used in more than 3,000 different construction materials and manufactured products. It is commonly found in heating system insulation, decorative spray-on ceilings, vinyl flooring, cement shake siding and a variety of additional materials. Some asbestos containing materials were still being installed in the late 1980's.

The asbestos content of different materials varies according to the product and how it is used. Among those materials with higher concentrations of asbestos are insulation products on heating systems and the backing on sheet vinyl flooring. However, an uncontrolled disturbance of any asbestos containing material in any concentration may be dangerous to your health!

Why is it a problem?

Breathing asbestos fibers could kill you.

When disturbed, asbestos breaks down into fibers up to 1,200 times thinner than a human hair. When inhaled, they become trapped in lung tissues. Medical research tells us that up to 30 years after inhalation, asbestos fibers can cause lung cancer or mesothelioma, a related terminal cancer of the tissue lining the chest cavity.

Because asbestos is a naturally occurring mineral and has been used so widely in manufactured products, including auto-mobile brake linings, it can be found almost everywhere. Trace amounts are in the air we breathe every day. Most of us have asbestos fibers in our lungs.

On the other hand, there's no known safe level of asbestos exposure. That's why medical environmental health and regulatory organizations stress the need to protect health by minimizing exposure to airborne asbestos fibers that accumulate at elevated levels. Elevated levels result from un-controlled disturbances and removals of asbestos materials.



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How do I know if it's asbestos?

Don't guess.

Look for asbestos markings on the product or track the product back to the manufacturer or supplier. If these approaches don't work, submit a small sample for laboratory analysis. Cost is minimal. Laboratories are listed in the yellow pages under "**Asbestos-Consulting and Testing**". Ask for a laboratory technician to instruct you how you should gather, package and mail the sample. Laboratory analysis is the **only** sure way to determine the presence of asbestos. If you wish not to have the suspect material analyzed, you should assume it **does** contain asbestos, but you **cannot assume it doesn't contain asbestos**.

If you suspect that you have disturbed asbestos in the interior of your home, contact an asbestos professional. It may not be safe to continue to occupy the affected area. If you need help contacting an asbestos professional or have questions, **call the YRCAA at 834-2050**.

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