

Asbestos information for public housing tenants

What is asbestos?

Asbestos is a group of naturally occurring minerals found in rock formations.

Asbestos fibres are strong, heat resistant and have insulating properties. In the past, mined asbestos has been mixed with other materials, to produce a variety of building products.

What does asbestos look like?

Asbestos looks like small material fibres.

It is often found in building materials such as walls, ceilings and fences. When it is used in these materials, it cannot be seen.

Products made from asbestos material come in all shapes and sizes.

Only a licensed asbestos inspector can accurately identify asbestos.

Is asbestos dangerous?

Asbestos only poses a risk to health when asbestos fibres are breathed in.

In normal circumstances, the risk to tenants from asbestos is very low.

If the house contains suspected asbestos that is not broken and in good condition, it is best to leave it alone.

If you are concerned, contact your local housing office or visit www.nt.gov.au

How could asbestos affect me?

When asbestos fibres are breathed in, they may lodge deep in lung tissue and cause inflammation, scarring and some more serious asbestos-related diseases.

The risk of developing an asbestos-related disease increases with the number of asbestos fibres a person breathes in during their life.

Is there asbestos in my house?

Houses built in Australia before 1983 may have suspected asbestos containing material (ACM).

The diagram on page two shows places suspected ACM may be found.

Why was asbestos used in building?

Asbestos has very good properties for making buildings strong and fire-resistant. It was used in buildings before it was discovered to be unsafe. Since then, it has been banned.

Where was asbestos used?

Material containing asbestos was used in a variety of ways but especially in:

- roof eaves
- internal and external wall cladding
- ceilings
- fences.

My house has damaged asbestos sheeting. What should I do?

If wall or ceiling sheeting in your home is damaged you should call your local housing office immediately.

The Department of Housing and Community Development will arrange an inspection if it appears there is a risk.

If there is any danger to your health the asbestos will be treated by a specialist organised by the department.

What does the inspection involve?

Contractors may need to check your living areas, bedrooms, wardrobes, cupboards, ceiling cavities and yard. A licenced asbestos inspector will assess the condition of the asbestos and organise its safe removal if necessary.

If asbestos-containing material is identified but is undamaged and in good condition it may not need to be removed.

What is the inspection process?

If asbestos is suspected in your home, minor samples will be taken away for inspection. If asbestos is found, you will be notified and contractors will remove or repair the exposed asbestos if required. However, asbestos that is in good condition is very low risk to tenants.

Is testing compulsory?

Yes, the department has a legal requirement to our tenants' health and safety to inspect for asbestos.

These inspections will allow the department to update our asbestos information and follows previous work undertaken to raise asbestos awareness.

Can I make alterations to my house if it has asbestos?

It is a requirement of the *Residential Tenancies Act* that you get approval from the department before attempting any alterations regardless of whether asbestos is present or not.

If the department approves your request to renovate be aware that certain actions can release significant numbers of asbestos fibres, such as:

- drilling or grinding
- cutting or sawing
- sanding.

More information about renovating is available at nt.gov.au

Where asbestos may be found in a typical home



Exterior - wall and roof sheeting, guttering and lining under eaves.

Living areas - asbestos cement sheeting in walls and ceilings.

Bathroom, toilet and laundry - asbestos cement sheet walls, and ceilings.

Kitchen - walls, splashbacks, ceilings, vinyl floor tiles and underlay for tiles.

Where can I get more information?

Contact the department:

Phone: 1800 104 076

Email: propertymanagergreaterdarwin.DHCD@nt.gov.au

Online: www.nt.gov.au