

ASBESTOS & You



Quick guide for trades



Asbestos didn't disappear when it was banned in the UK. It could be in the house or building you are working on right now.

Left alone, it isn't dangerous. However, once disturbed, tiny asbestos fibres are released which can cause lung disease and cancer if breathed in.

Make sure you know the basics about identifying asbestos and what to do when you come across it.

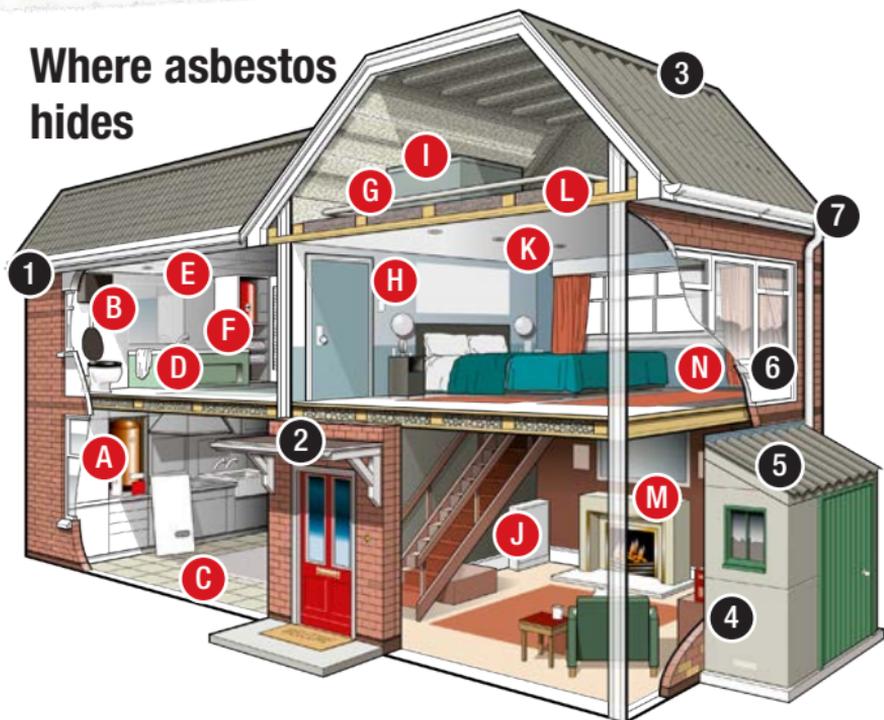
This guide will help you deal with asbestos on every job.

Did you know?

- Around 5,000 people die every year from asbestos-related diseases.
- Every tradesperson is likely to carry out work in a building that contains asbestos at some point.
- There is no cure for asbestos-related diseases once they have developed.
- Asbestos can be in any building built before the year 2000.
- Asbestos remains in millions of homes, business premises and public buildings today.
- Even small jobs like drilling a hole can expose you to hidden asbestos.
- If your work is likely to disturb asbestos, you and your employer must take action to ensure you and others are not exposed to fibres.
- You must be appropriately trained to work safely with asbestos or be aware of it and stop work.
- If you are self-employed you will have the same duties as an employer.

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Where asbestos hides

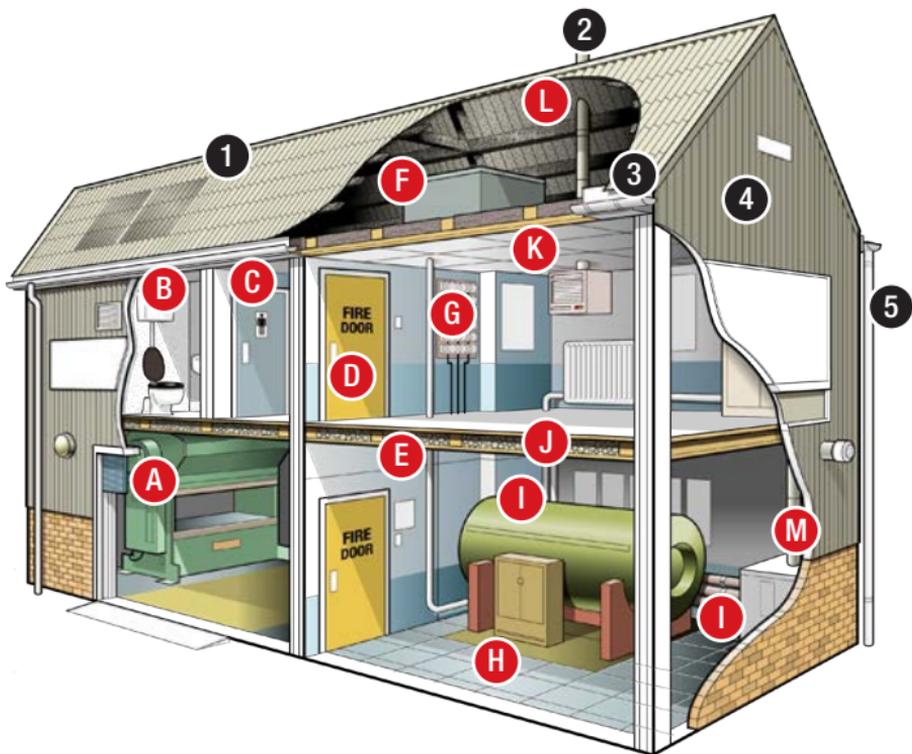


Residential property – Inside

- | | |
|--|---|
| A asbestos insulating board (AIB) around boiler | G pipe lagging |
| B toilet cistern | H AIB partition wall |
| C vinyl floor tiles backed with asbestos paper and bitumen adhesive | I asbestos cement water tank |
| D AIB or asbestos cement bath panels | J AIB behind fuse box |
| E AIB ceiling tiles | K textured decorative coating, for example Artex |
| F AIB airing cupboard and/or sprayed insulation coating boiler | L loose fill insulation |
| | M AIB behind fire |
| | N AIB or asbestos cement interior window panel |

Outside

- 1 AIB or asbestos cement soffits and fascias
- 2 roofing felt
- 3 asbestos cement roof tiles/slates
- 4 asbestos cement panels
- 5 profiled asbestos cement sheeting
- 6 AIB or asbestos cement exterior window panel
- 7 gutters and asbestos cement downpipes



Industrial property – Inside

- | | |
|--|--|
| A asbestos rope seals, gaskets and paper | H vinyl floor tiles backed with asbestos paper and bitumen adhesive |
| B toilet cistern | I lagging on boilers and pipes |
| C textured decorating coatings on walls and ceilings, for example Artex | J loose fill insulation |
| D asbestos insulating board (AIB) panels in fire doors | K AIB ceiling tiles |
| E AIB partition walls | L sprayed coatings on ceilings, walls, beams and columns |
| F asbestos cement water tank | M AIB around boilers |
| G asbestos flash guards in a fuse box | |

Outside

- | |
|---|
| 1 profiled asbestos cement roof |
| 2 asbestos cement pipe |
| 3 AIB or asbestos cement soffits and fascias |
| 4 asbestos cement panels |
| 5 asbestos cement gutters and downpipes |

Practical steps for every job

There is no safe level of asbestos exposure. It can be in places that you might not expect, so you should stay aware of hidden asbestos.

A good place to start is 'A worker's guide to asbestos safety': www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/workers.htm. It has clear guidance and videos on what you and your employer must do to protect you and others from asbestos risks.

The Asbestos Essentials are a useful series of task sheets with step-by-step guidance: www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/essentials.

Before you start work

It is important that you and your employer talk about and understand the actions needed to keep you and other people safe. The actions your employer could take include:

- checking if the building was built or refurbished before the year 2000;
- ensuring you both understand the current building asbestos register and it covers where you are planning to work;
- planning the job, if possible, to avoid disturbing asbestos;
- checking if a survey has been done to find the location and condition of any asbestos where you are working. This should include asbestos hidden within the building fabric.

Removing or repairing asbestos

Before you start work, your employer must ensure any asbestos is safely removed or easily repaired and protected.

This will usually require a specialist contractor licensed by HSE.

On the job

- Be aware that hidden asbestos could still be found even if a survey has been done.
- Be aware of what to watch for and where asbestos hides (pages 4 and 5).
- If you suspect asbestos, assume it is present until proven otherwise.
- Disturbing asbestos during a job may result in much greater exposure risk, expense and project delays than dealing with it beforehand.
- If you're not trained to work with asbestos or you are not prepared - **STOP WORK.**

If you think you have found asbestos

If you come across any material you think may contain asbestos, **stop work**. Speak to your employer, or the building owner, to find out if there is asbestos in the building.

Your employer should ask to see the building's asbestos register or survey and check they have enough information to do the work. Do not do any work until this has been completed.

If asbestos is disturbed

If asbestos is disturbed during your work it must be dealt with quickly and appropriately.

Stop work immediately and follow the guidance on what to do if you discover or accidentally disturb asbestos:

www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/guidance/em1.pdf.

Remember

Do not work on asbestos-containing materials unless you have been trained and have a risk assessment and plan of work for that particular material.

Asbestos awareness training does not allow you to work on asbestos. Find out more at www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/training.htm.

Asbestos: Non-licensed and licensed work

What is non-licensed asbestos work?

Some materials are lower risk and you can work on them but your employer must:

- carry out an asbestos risk assessment and plan the work;
- put the right controls in place to protect you and others;
- provide you with training for non-licensable work for the tasks you plan to carry out.

If in doubt assume it is licensed until proven otherwise.

What is licensed asbestos work?

Some materials are high risk and it is illegal to work on these unless you hold an asbestos licence.

Do not touch the following materials – they should only be worked on by a licensed asbestos contractor:

- asbestos loose fill insulation;
- asbestos sprayed coating, known as limpet;
- pre-formed insulation such as asbestos pipe lagging;
- most repair or any removal of asbestos insulation;
- most work on asbestos insulating boards;
- large amounts of asbestos-containing debris or material.

Information about licensable work and finding a licensed contractor:

www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/licensing/licensed-contractor.htm

Common asbestos-containing materials

The following pages provide examples of typical asbestos-containing materials.

They will help you identify asbestos in typical locations and tell you:

- where it is found;
- what it looks like;
- who can work on it.

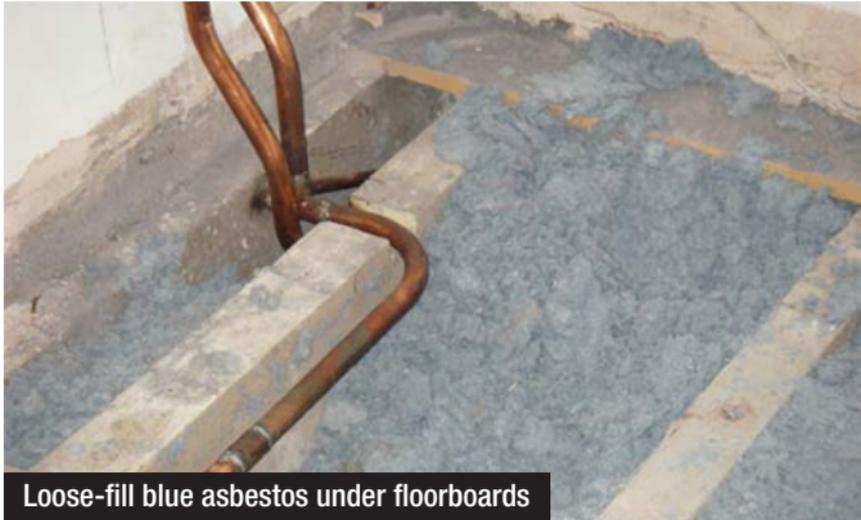
Work on any type of asbestos can be dangerous. The examples show both lower and high-risk tasks.

All work on asbestos-containing materials requires specific training and controls. The examples indicate what is required.

We also have photos and more detailed information about asbestos locations:

www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/location-materials.htm

Loose-fill asbestos insulation



Loose-fill blue asbestos under floorboards

- Found in between cavity walls, under floorboards and in loft spaces.
- Loose, fluffy insulation material (similar to candyfloss), which may be blue-grey or whitish.

Do not touch!

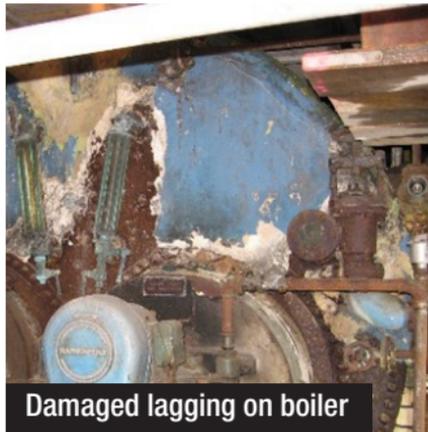
This is probably the most dangerous asbestos-containing material. If disturbed, it can release large amounts of fibres into the air, where they can be breathed in.

Do not work on this material under any circumstances unless you are an HSE-licensed contractor.

Information about licensable work and finding a licensed contractor:
www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/licensing/licensed-contractor.htm

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Thermal insulation such as lagging on pipes



- Asbestos insulation found on pipes.
- Often painted over or protected by outer coating.

Do not touch!

Work on asbestos lagging is high risk and must be done by an HSE licensed contractor.

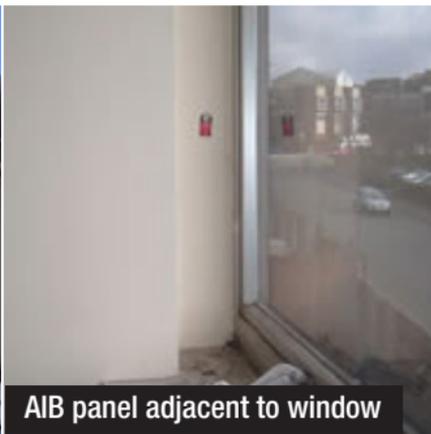
Information about licensable work and finding a licensed contractor:

www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/licensing/licensed-contractor.htm

Asbestos insulation board (AIB)



AIB panels under roof eaves



AIB panel adjacent to window

Asbestos insulating board (AIB) can be found in:

- internal partition walls and bulkheads above ceilings;
- fire door panels;
- lift shaft linings;
- ceiling tiles.

Some short duration work for small or minor maintenance tasks on AIB can be carried out by non-licensed workers. You must be trained to recognise and work safely with asbestos.

Our task sheets show you how to safely carry out non-licensed work on AIB in www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/essentials.

More information about licensable work:

www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/licensing/licensed-contractor.htm

Spray coating insulation



Sprayed underside of joist



Sprayed metal installation

- Often found on the underside of roofs and sometimes sides of buildings and warehouses.
- Also used as fire protection on steel and reinforced concrete beams/columns and on underside of floors.
- Usually white or grey in colour with a rough surface, although they may have been painted.

It was very easy to overspray or get a 'splash back' from the equipment used to apply this so there is likely to be debris around the sprayed area.

All work with sprayed coatings is high risk and must be done by an HSE licensed contractor.

More information about licensable work and finding a licensed asbestos contractor: www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/licensing/licensed-contractor.htm

Gas/electric meter and fuse box



AIB back board



Asbestos flash guard

- Often found in halls and under stairs.
- In old-style fuse boxes each fuse wire may have an individual asbestos flash guard.
- The back panel may also be asbestos insulating board (AIB).
- Meters may sit on an AIB shelf or be separated by an AIB partition ceiling tile.

Work with AIB can easily release asbestos fibres. It can only be done by suitably trained professionals and must be risk assessed by someone with enough knowledge, training and expertise.

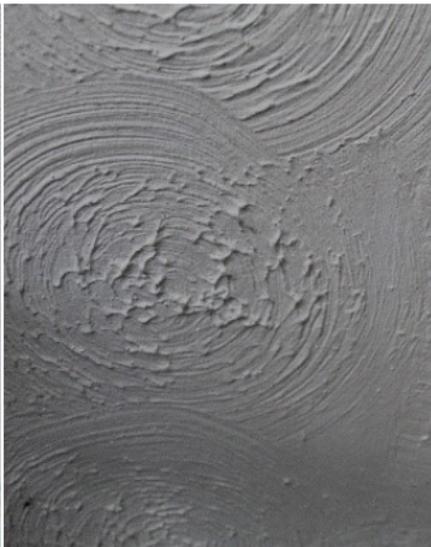
Some of these materials can be worked on by non-licensed, work-trained people. There is practical advice in the Asbestos Essentials task sheets: www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/essentials/index.htm.

More information about licensable work and finding a licensed asbestos contractor: www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/licensing/licensed-contractor.htm

Decorative textured coatings, such as Artex



Asbestos textured coating



- Often found on walls and ceilings.
- Never sand dry textured coatings or scrape off.

Although it is mainly non-licensed work, appropriate training is required to work on these materials.

You can find specific advice for work on textured decorative coating in our Asbestos Essentials task sheets:

www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/essentials

We also have photos and more detailed information about asbestos locations:

www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/location-materials.htm

Toilet seat and cistern



Toilet cistern containing asbestos-reinforced materials

- Can contain asbestos-reinforced materials.
- Where possible, remove in one piece without breaking up, so fibres are not released.
- Using a crowbar to lever from the wall could release asbestos fibres.

Some of these materials can be worked on by non-licensed, work-trained people.

You can find practical advice in the Asbestos Essentials task sheets: www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/essentials

Floor coverings



Vinyl floor tiles



Bitumen adhesive

Asbestos was added to:

- PVC and thermoplastic floor tiles;
- stair nosings;
- adhesive and screed materials.

They can be found in areas like corridors and kitchens. Old asbestos floor tiles can be hidden under carpets.

- The tile backing paper may also contain asbestos.
- Never sand the floor.

Some of these materials can be worked on by people trained in non-licensed work.

Asbestos Essentials task sheets:

www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/essentials/index.htm

Asbestos cement products



Asbestos cement roof tiles



Downpipe and roof panelling

Asbestos cement has many uses inside and out, and can be found in many places including:

- water tanks, frequently found in older properties built before 1980, some cement water tanks are also spray coated;
- gutters and downpipes;
- wall panels;
- roofs.

Work on asbestos cement (whether removal, maintaining or cleaning) is non-licensed. However, appropriate training is required to work on these materials.

Asbestos Essentials task sheets:

www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/essentials/index.htm

Further information

Guidance and videos on asbestos safety for workers:

www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/workers.htm

Asbestos information, instruction and training:

www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/training.htm

Photos and information about asbestos locations:

www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/location-materials.htm

Asbestos and You campaign website:

<https://workright.campaign.gov.uk/asbestos/>

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First published 02/23, revised 03/24.

Published by the Health and Safety Executive 03/24