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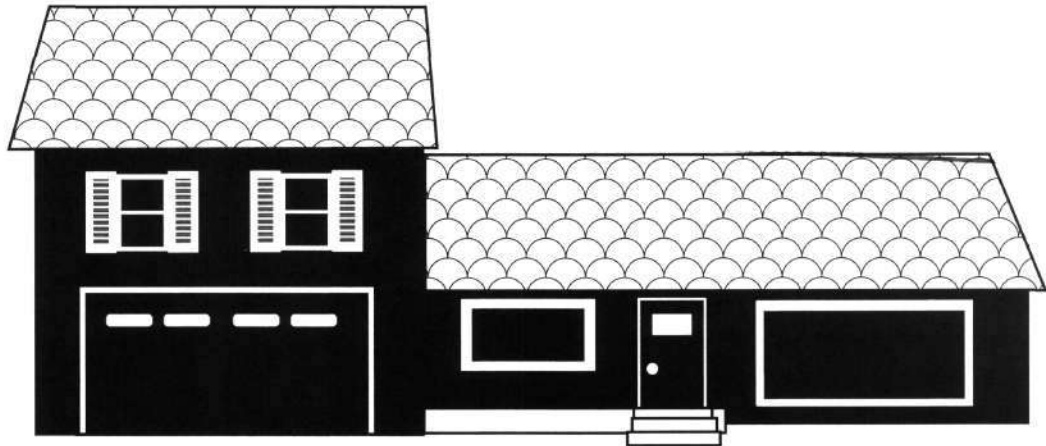
Asbestos in the Home
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ASBESTOS IN THE HOME



Asbestos is the common name for a group of naturally occurring silicate materials that separate into fibers.

The fibers are fire-resistant, very strong, and not easily destroyed or degraded by natural processes. Asbestos was used for many years in home building products.

Concern for asbestos contamination within the home is due to research linking lung cancer and other lung diseases to the inhalation of asbestos fibers.

Although the health hazards of low-level asbestos exposure are still undetermined, it is prudent to reduce exposure as much as possible.

WHEN IS ASBESTOS A PROBLEM?

A health threat exists only when asbestos fibers are released from the product and float freely in the air where they can be inhaled. The fibers are so tiny that they cannot be seen. They may pass through the filters of normal vacuum cleaners. The more crumbly the material, the more likely it will pose a significant risk.

IT MAY BE BETTER TO LEAVE ASBESTOS THAT IS IN GOOD CONDITION ALONE. Improper removal of asbestos can create a health risk because the fibers are released into the air. A licensed asbestos removal contractor is highly recommended if it is necessary to handle the material.

Names of asbestos removal contractors may be obtained from the Michigan Department of Public Health, Division of Occupational Health (517) 335-8250, in Lansing.

WHAT PRODUCTS ARE MOST LIKELY TO CONTAIN ASBESTOS?

The following areas of the home are most likely to have asbestos in them:

- **FIREPLACES.** Some artificial logs sold for gas fireplaces were 90 to 100 percent asbestos. This product was banned in 1978 but may still be in some homes.
- **HEATING SYSTEMS.** Pipes, metal heating ducts and boilers may be wrapped in asbestos insulation that can release asbestos fibers if damaged or if improperly removed. Asbestos tape or paper may be inside heater registers. Blowing air through the system can cause the surface to release fibers. The furnace may be sitting on an asbestos pad. If the pad is damaged or deteriorating, it should be removed. Repairs to heating systems that contain asbestos materials should be done by a licensed contractor.
- **BASEMENTS OR CRAWL SPACES.** These areas may become contaminated if material from pipes or heat duct wrap falls on the floor. Sweeping or walking in it can produce airborne fibers and thus create a hazard.
- **FUSE BOXES AND GASKETS.** Old fuse boxes and the door gaskets of some woodburning stoves, old furnaces and hobby kilns may contain asbestos. Contact the manufacturer if you suspect asbestos. Be sure to include such information as serial number and model number.

• **FLOORS.** Asbestos-backed linoleum or vinyl floor tiles can release asbestos if broken, pulled up or sanded. It is better to cover an old floor with particle board or plywood before installing a new one. An undisturbed floor is not a hazard.

• **CEILINGS.** Textured acoustical ceiling tiles are generally not a problem as long as they are not damaged. Try not to disturb the ceiling. Sweeping for cobwebs or painting may release fibers. Instead, use a damp cloth and dispose of the cloth in a plastic bag.

• **WALLS.** Homes constructed between 1930 and 1950 may contain asbestos insulation between the walls. This is a problem only if the insulation is dis-

turbed. Use a trained contractor if undertaking major renovations.

• **ROOFS, SHINGLES, SIDING.** Some of these products contain asbestos. Since they are outdoors, the health risk is minimal. Unless heavily worn or heavily damaged, they can be left in place.

• **APPLIANCES.** In the past, some parts of appliances contained asbestos. Today asbestos is used only in parts that do not release fibers during use. If you are concerned about asbestos in an appliance, do not repair it yourself. Instead, hire a trained repair person who will know how to avoid exposure.

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