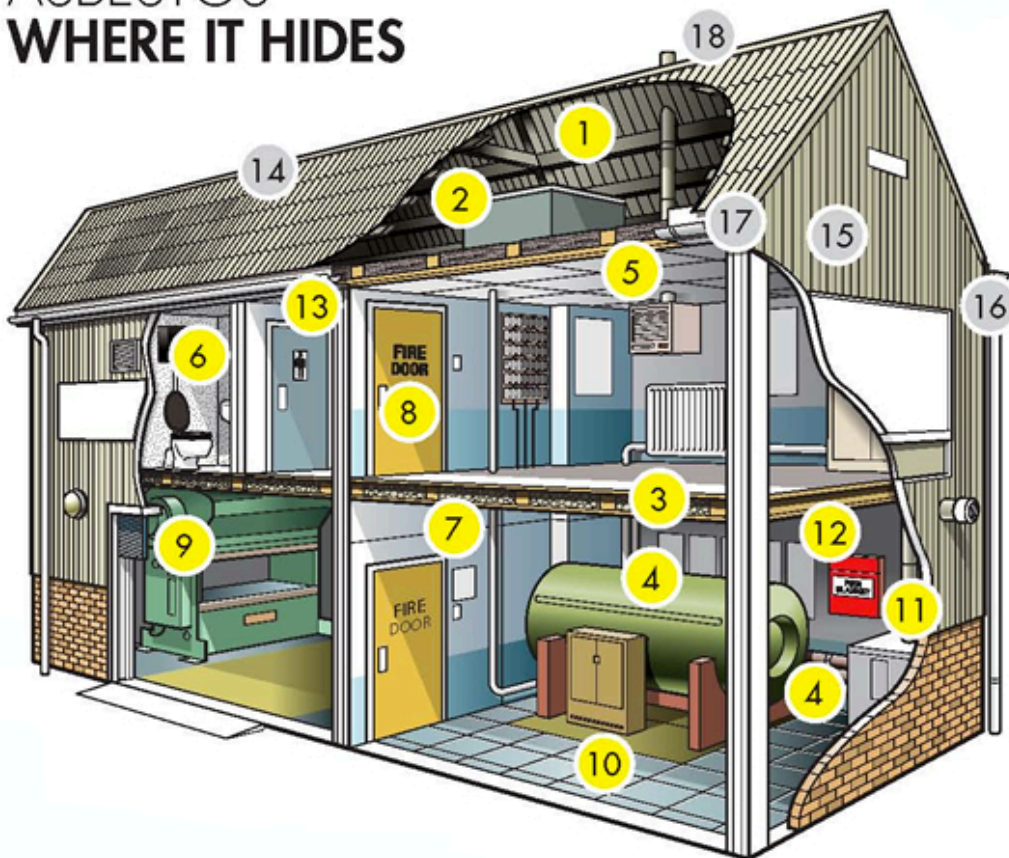


# Asbestos.

## Why is ASBESTOS dangerous?

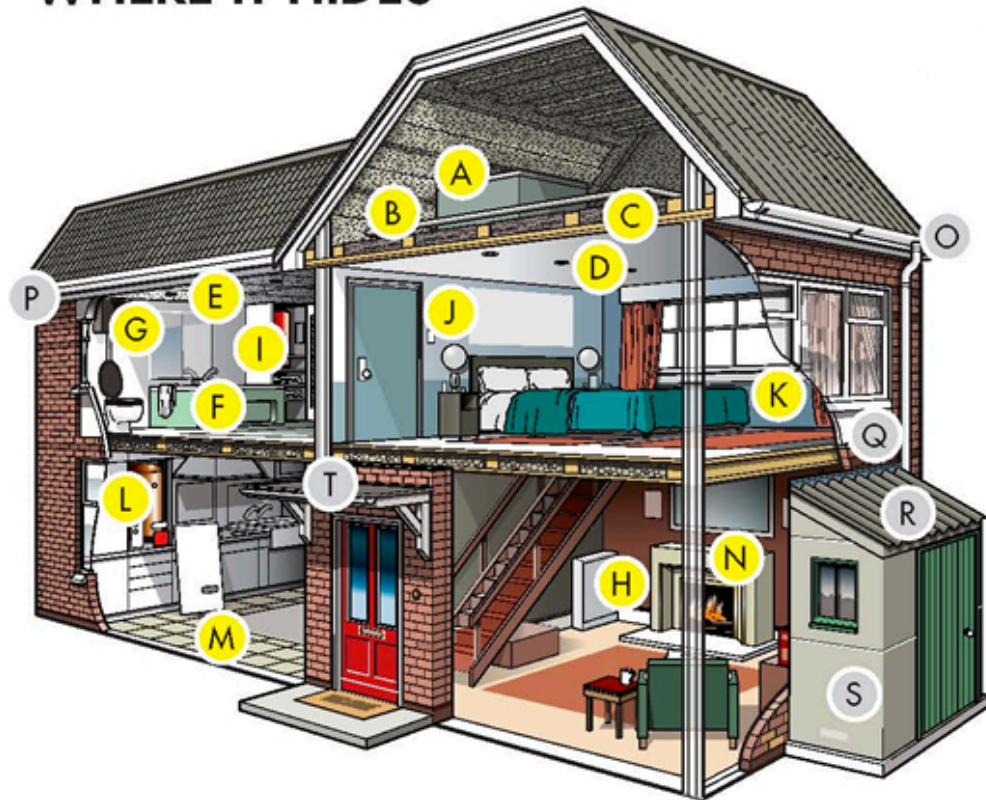
- 20 Tradespeople die, on average, each week from asbestos related diseases.
- Asbestos still kills around 5000 workers each year, this is more than the number of people killed on the road
- 
- Asbestos can be in any house or building built before 2000.
- Asbestos is still present in millions of homes and buildings.

## ASBESTOS WHERE IT HIDES



### In Commercial buildings

# ASBESTOS WHERE IT HIDES



## In residential buildings

### How do I identify Asbestos?

It can be difficult to identify asbestos, as it is often mixed with other materials. The HSE asbestos [image gallery](#) shows a number of common materials that contain asbestos.

**Some common places are shown in the photos here.**



**Asbestos Soffit**



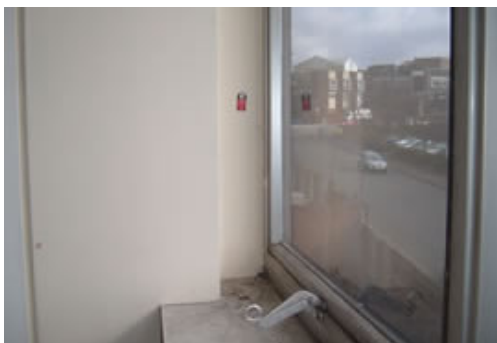
**Asbestos textured coating**



**Asbestos cement roofing**



**Floor tiles**



**AIB Window panel**

## **Training**

### **Is Asbestos training a legal responsibility?**

The current Regulations place a legal duty on employers to provide information, instruction and training to any of their employees who are likely to be exposed to asbestos as part of their work.

The three main types of information, instruction and training are:

- Asbestos awareness training
- Training for non-licensable asbestos work – ie the type of work described in HSE's Asbestos essentials.
- Training for licensable asbestos work

People that carry out any work on asbestos materials must be trained and supervised properly.

You need training even if you worked with asbestos in the past.

### **I may have been inadvertently exposed to asbestos. What should I do?**

People who believe they may have been exposed to asbestos are understandably anxious and concerned about the possible effects on their health. Many cases of inadvertent, short-term exposure to asbestos will most likely have led to minimal exposure to fibres, with little likelihood of any long-term ill health effects.

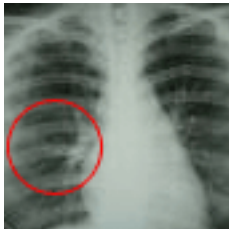
Although the type of asbestos involved and duration of exposure may be known, there may be little reliable information about the level of exposure. These are all important factors in determining the level of risk - the more fibres that are released by an asbestos-containing material, and the longer the work activity lasts, the greater the cumulative exposure to asbestos fibres and, therefore, an increased risk of ill health effects.

Some work activities are more likely to create a significant concentration of asbestos fibres in the air, and therefore, add to the risk if suitable precautions are not in place; for example:

- use of power tools (to drill, cut etc) on most ACMs
- work that leads to physical disturbance (knocking, breaking, smashing) of an ACM that should only be handled by a licensed contractor eg sprayed coating, lagging, asbestos insulating board (AIB)
- manually cutting or drilling AIB
- work involving aggressive physical disturbance of asbestos cement eg breaking or smashing

Some asbestos-containing materials release fibres more easily than others. For detailed information on types of asbestos-containing material and the likelihood of fibre release, see: Appendix 2 (page 53) of [Asbestos: The survey guide](#).

If you are concerned about possible exposure to asbestos from work activities, you are advised to consult your GP and ask for a note to be made in your personal record about possible exposure, including date(s), duration, type of asbestos and likely exposure levels (if known). In some circumstances, your GP may refer you to a specialist in respiratory medicine. HSE does not advocate routine X-rays for people who have had an inadvertent exposure to asbestos. Asbestos-related damage to the lungs takes years to develop and become visible on chest X-rays. X-ray examinations cannot indicate whether or not asbestos fibres have been inhaled.



## Mesothelioma

Mesothelioma is a cancer which affects the lining of the lungs (pleura) and the lining surrounding the lower digestive tract (peritoneum). It is almost exclusively related to asbestos exposure and by the time it is diagnosed, it is almost always fatal.

## Am I at risk?

Workers involved in refurbishment, maintenance and other similar trades, could be at risk of exposure to asbestos during their work. This includes:

- Heating and ventilation engineers
- Demolition workers
- Carpenters and joiners
- Plumbers
- Roofing contractors
- Painters and decorators
- Plasterers
- Construction workers
- Fire and burglar alarm installers
- Shop fitters
- Gas fitters

- Computer and data installers
- General maintenance staff eg caretakers
- Telecommunications engineers
- Architects, building surveyors, and other such professionals
- Cable layers
- Electricians

This list does not include all occupations at risk from potential exposure to asbestos.

## **When am I most at risk?**

### **You are most at risk when:**

- the building you are working on was built before the year 2000
- you are working on an unfamiliar site
- asbestos-containing materials were not identified before the job was started
- asbestos-containing materials were identified but this information was not passed on by the people in charge to the people doing the work
- you haven't done a risk assessment
- you don't know how to recognise and work safely with asbestos
- you have not had appropriate information, instruction and training
- you know how to work safely with asbestos, but you choose to put yourself at risk by not following proper precautions, perhaps to save time or because no one else is following proper procedures

### **Remember**

- you can't see or smell asbestos fibres in the air
- the effects of being exposed to asbestos take many years to show up - avoid breathing it in now
- people who smoke and are also exposed to asbestos fibres are at a much greater risk of developing lung cancer
- asbestos is only a danger when fibres are made airborne and breathed in
- as long as the asbestos is in good condition and it is located somewhere where it can't be easily damaged then it shouldn't be a risk to you

### **Resources.**

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/guidance/em1.pdf>

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/guidance/em2.pdf>

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/index.htm>

<http://www.beware-asbestos.info/>