

BERNICA

# Management of asbestos

Your guide to how we manage asbestos



Investing  
in homes

# Management of asbestos

**Any home that was built before 2000 may contain some form of asbestos, but as long as it is not damaged, flaking or producing dust, it is unlikely to cause you problems.**

It is important to be aware that your home may contain asbestos, so you can avoid doing anything that could put you or family at risk.

If you have any concerns about asbestos in your property, please contact our Technical Services Department by calling 0344 800 3800.

## What is asbestos?

Asbestos is a naturally occurring mineral that has been used for many centuries. It was commonly used in building materials between the 1950s and the 1980s. Asbestos was often used to fireproof buildings but was also used as a general building material. Almost all buildings built or changed during this period are likely to contain some form of asbestos. Products that contain asbestos can often look the same as those that do not.

Asbestos is dangerous because of the very thin fibres which cannot be seen by the naked eye but they can be breathed in causing damage to the respiratory system.

The greatest risk occurs when asbestos containing materials are drilled, sawn, sanded or scrubbed which may release fibres causing high levels of exposure.



## What is the likelihood of exposure to asbestos in the home?

There are very low levels of asbestos in the air all the time, exposure to this low level of asbestos fibres is unlikely to cause harm to health.

Many people worry about having asbestos in their homes and it is not always easy to spot materials that could contain asbestos on their appearance alone, especially if they have been decorated or covered over by other materials.

Experienced surveyors and health and safety specialists are best able to identify them.

We keep a register of properties where asbestos has been found or is believed to exist. This register is updated each time we survey your home or remove some asbestos. If asbestos is found and it is in good condition, we leave it in place, which is safe. If the asbestos is in poor condition or has the potential to cause harm we remove it or it is made safe.

Your tenancy agreement requires you to get permission before you carry out any improvements, alterations or make additions to your property; this is to help control and monitor asbestos which may be in your home.

**If you damage what you suspect to be asbestos, leave everything in place, close the door leading to the room and contact us immediately. We will arrange to have a sample taken and tested to establish if it contains asbestos and take appropriate action.**

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## Where might I find asbestos in my home?

### Typical locations of asbestos materials external to the dwelling:

- Eaves/Soffits
- Rainwater goods (guttering, downpipes, soil pipes)
- Flue pipes and terminals
- Hip, ridge and roof tiles
- Corrugated cement sheeting, usually found on outbuildings and garage roofs.

### Typical locations of asbestos materials internal to the dwelling:

- Textured coating. e.g. artex type decorative coatings (prior to 1992)
- Fire stop panels (inside heater cupboards, drying cupboards and around old boilers/tanks)
- Floor tiles and the adhesive bonding the tiles to the floors
- WC cistern and toilet seats
- Water storage tanks
- Flue pipes
- Electrical mains distribution cupboards and fuse boxes
- Gasket and rope seals to old gas and solid fuel fires
- Bath panels and boxings.

We have carried out asbestos surveys to nearly all properties built before 1985 and already removed asbestos materials which pose a threat to health. As improvements are made to your homes, asbestos is being removed or managed to ensure that you are not exposed.



## Before you do DIY or similar work

You may wish to carry out DIY to your home, after getting written permission as required by your tenancy agreement. We will not give permission if the work could disturb or damage asbestos containing-materials.

If there are any asbestos products in your home it's important that you don't damage or disturb them in any way. If you carry out DIY on asbestos products you are putting yourself in danger.

## Decorating/removing textured coatings on walls and ceilings

If the textured coating (artex) was applied prior to 1992 it may contain asbestos. If in doubt you should always seek advice before commencing works.

### Contact us immediately if:

- Materials that you believe may contain asbestos have been disturbed or damaged
- Textured coatings or sealants are peeling or breaking off
- Asbestos cement based products, guttering, soffit boards, shed or garage walls and roofs etc. which normally have a hard durable surface are broken, badly weathered or eroded and if they have caused cement debris in your garden.

We know you may be concerned about the presence of asbestos in your home and may wish to speak to someone who can take you through this leaflet in further detail.

Bernicia has trained staff who specialise in asbestos management and we are members of the I.A.T.P. (Independent Asbestos Training Providers).

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## Frequently Asked Questions

### **If there are asbestos containing materials in my home, why not remove it straight away?**

Needlessly disturbing asbestos containing materials that are in good condition may produce dust and could increase health risks.

When we survey homes to find out whether there are asbestos containing materials present, we also check the condition of the material.

Materials in good condition do not cause health problems. If materials are in poor condition, we will consider removing them or sealing them, however, when we need to do building work on your home, disturbing asbestos may be unavoidable. If so, we would look at how we could safely remove or work safely on the asbestos material.

### **I think I may have disturbed or damaged some asbestos containing materials in my home – what should I do?**

Contact us on **0344 800 3800** and speak with a member of the Technical Services Team and we will arrange to have the material inspected and assessed.

We will then decide what action is required to make it safe.

### **Is asbestos in textured coatings (artex)?**

It can be but it is encapsulated inside the paint which covers it but remember, do not sand the surface of the artex and report any damage to your ceilings/walls which are artexed.

If you are in any doubt, please speak to our Technical Services Department for specific advice.



### **I think I have asbestos in my property. Are there any special precautions I should take?**

We are responsible for most elements on or in your property. Most of the asbestos containing materials are likely to be very low risk products and many are likely to be outdoors so there is unlikely to be any risk of exposure to asbestos fibres.

### **The paint on my asbestos soffit boards is flaking. What is the best way to renovate and redecorate them?**

We are responsible for this element and any necessary remedial action will be addressed in our planned maintenance programmes.

### **What requirement is there for landlords to inform tenants of the presence of asbestos in a house?**

There are regulations that require landlords to provide and maintain rented accommodation in a fit state of repair but at present there is no specific legal requirement for landlords to inform tenants of the presence of asbestos or to remove asbestos containing materials, however, in certain situations where the landlord should reasonably be aware of its presence and if it presents a significant risk to the tenant, there is a duty to care and manage the risk.

### **Why have you removed asbestos from empty properties but not from mine?**

When a property is empty this is the ideal opportunity to remove asbestos with minimal risk and inconvenience.

## How to contact us



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