

 <b>West Lothian Council</b>	<b>Environmental Health</b>		<b>SUBJECT:</b> Asbestos in homes
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		Pest Control/Dog Warden	

## Information Sheet PH05 Asbestos in homes

Many homes built up to early 1990s may use materials which contain asbestos in certain areas. When it is found or needs to be disposed of, special care needs to be taken.

This advice sheet is for householders. If you have a business your responsibilities may be different. Information on asbestos for businesses is available free of the Health and Safety Executive web site at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/>.

### What is Asbestos?

Asbestos was used in building material in the UK up to 1999. Its use was banned in this country, with a full European ban in 2005, so any building built before 2000 could contain asbestos.

Asbestos comes as very fine fibres and is almost always incorporated into another material, e.g. cement. Common examples in homes are:

- Water tanks (there is no risk to health from drinking water which has been in an asbestos tank) (Up to 16%)
- Boiler cupboard linings (Up to 30%)
- Soffits (at edge of roof) (Up to 30%)
- Corrugated cement garage / outbuilding roofs (up to 16%)
- Some types of 'Artex' (up to 4%)
- Some types of vinyl floor tiles (2%)

### Why can it be dangerous?

When asbestos-containing materials are damaged or disturbed they can release fibres which, if breathed in, increase chances of getting asbestos related disease.

If you or your family smoke, the risk is increased many times.

### What can be done about it?

Asbestos is only dangerous if disturbed and broken. This means that if it will not be disturbed or at risk of being broken, it is often best left where it is. Paint it over with a sticky (glossy) paint to bind the surface and mark it as possible asbestos to make sure no-one drills into it or breaks it in future.

If it needs to be removed, most can only be removed by a licensed specialist contractor. If you choose to do it yourself, you may put yourself and your family at risk.

## **What can householders do, and where do they start?**

If it can be removed in one piece, householders can remove asbestos cement panels themselves. A water spray bottle should be available to hand to thoroughly wet any screw holes or cracks which develop during removal. Do not use a vacuum cleaner as it will only make loose fibres airborne, which increases the risk.

For more specific information see the Asbestos Essentials web site (<http://www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/essentials/index.htm>) for safe methods of removing asbestos containing materials. Sheets A11-A16 are particularly relevant to householders.

Other types of asbestos removal must only be carried out by specialist contractors.

## **Disposing of Asbestos**

Because of the dangers from asbestos if it is disturbed or broken, there are strict laws on transporting and disposing of asbestos. A specialist contractor will be needed and unfortunately transport and disposal is not cheap. Contractors can be found in the phone book under 'asbestos contractors'.

Alternatively, West Lothian Council's Waste management Service can arrange the inspection and disposal of material for you. However, you will have to pay the cost of the transport in advance. You will not be charged for the disposal of the material itself. To request Waste Management to arrange a contractor to dispose of your asbestos containing material, call 01506 777800.

## **More Information**

More information on asbestos can be found at:

- <http://www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/general-info.pdf>
- <http://www.lunguk.org/you-and-your-lungs/conditions-and-diseases/asbestos>
- [http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/HomeAndCommunity/Planning/DoingWorkYourself/DG\\_10022562](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/HomeAndCommunity/Planning/DoingWorkYourself/DG_10022562)

For information and advice for householders in West Lothian, contact Environmental Health at County Buildings, High Street, Linlithgow, EH49 7EZ. Telephone 01506 282500, Fax 01506 282448, e-mail [environmentalhealth@westlothian.gov.uk](mailto:environmentalhealth@westlothian.gov.uk).