

Asbestos in Flooded Homes: Where it Might Be Found and Precautions to Follow

EXTERIOR SURFACES

Exterior walls and closed decks were sometimes built with fire retardant sheeting in the form of asbestos paper. If it looks like a thick gray cardboard, it may contain asbestos. If left undisturbed and in good condition, the undersheeting is considered safe. However, if a wall needs to be taken out, or siding and shingles removed, you could release many fibers in the process of drilling, sawing, and removing. See the last paragraph of this document for proper protection during removal.

Cement asbestos board (commonly referred to as CAB or transite) has been used in houses as sheets for straight and lap siding, roofs and exterior walls. The material is hard and brittle, normally light gray in color, was pre-drilled for fastening, and often was factory primed and painted. Since this material is mainly outside the home, and the asbestos is bound in a hard material, it presents little hazard, unless altered by drilling, sawing, or sanding. When CAB/transite becomes worn or damaged, spray paint it to ensure sealing in the fibers. If you must remove CAB/transite wet the material and cut or pull the nails so that damage or breakage of the CAB/transite is minimized. If removed in this manner the CAB/transite can be placed in 6 mill plastic bags for disposal at any landfill. Loose CAB/transite should be wetted, picked up, placed in 6 mil plastic bag for disposal at any landfill.

WALL AND CEILING INSULATION

Loose blown-in and batt insulation infrequently have been known to contain asbestos in homes built or remodeled between 1930 and 1950. This material was primarily a vermiculite insulation which is gray and granular. Areas found include outside walls and floor or roof/attic spaces between structural joists and rafters. This material has the potential for release of asbestos fibers. See the last paragraph of this document for proper protection if this material is disturbed or has to be removed.

FLOOR COVERINGS

Vinyl tile and vinyl adhesive may contain asbestos. These products are considered safe unless the flooring is altered or damaged. Damage could occur as a result of prolonged or excessive abrasion. Pulverizing, sawing, cutting, grinding, and sanding will release asbestos fibers into the environment. When replacement or repair becomes necessary, these flooring products should be removed by taking them up as intact as possible using a flat bladed hoe to get under the tile and pry up. If removed in this manner the tiles can be placed in 6 mill plastic bags for disposal at any landfill.

Vinyl sheet covering manufactured in the 1950s through 1980 sometimes contained asbestos in the paper backing and has the potential for release of asbestos fibers if it is removed. See the last paragraph of this document for proper protection during removal.

If you need to replace floor covering, sometimes the best solution is to lay the new floor directly over the old one.

FURNACES, BOILERS, HEATERS, & PIPES INSULATION

Insulation blankets (the outside covering or shell), door gaskets, duct insulation, and tape at duct connections of furnaces and boilers all may contain asbestos. Asbestos-containing insulation and cement are generally found in older homes installed dates between 1930 and 1972. The material is white or grey in color and resembles the plaster used in casts to protect broken bones. If the insulation is damaged and has to be removed there is the potential for the release of asbestos fibers. See the last paragraph of this document for proper protection during removal.

Steam and hot water pipes were insulated with asbestos-containing material, particularly at elbows, tees, and valves. Its appearance is similar to that found on boilers. Pipes may also be wrapped in an asbestos "blanket", or asbestos paper (which looks very much like corrugated cardboard). Asbestos-containing insulation has also been used on and inside round and rectangular furnace ducts. Sometimes the duct itself may be made of asbestos-containing materials. There is a potential for asbestos fibers to be released if this material is removed. See the last paragraph of this document for proper protection during removal.

INTERIOR WALLS AND CEILINGS

Sprayed-on or toweled-on surface material on wall and ceiling surfaces of some homes may be composed of asbestos-containing materials (primarily in the 1950s & 1960s). If these materials have to be removed there is a potential for asbestos fiber to be released. See the last paragraph of this document for proper protection during removal.

SAMPLING AND ANALYSIS

The only way to determine if the materials identified above contain asbestos is by sampling and analysis. A list of Consultant Services companies can be found at <http://www.kdheks.gov/radiation/indexasb.html> that provides those services. You can also obtain a list by contacting the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) at (785) 296-1560.

REMOVAL OF ASBESTOS

KDHE recommends that removal of asbestos containing materials in homes with the potential of a fiber release (friable asbestos) be completed by a Kansas licensed asbestos abatement contractor and if the homeowner hires someone to remove friable asbestos it must be completed by a Kansas licensed asbestos abatement contractor. A list of licensed asbestos abatement contractors can be found at <http://www.kdheks.gov/radiation/indexasb.html> or by contacting KDHE. If homeowners decide to remove potential asbestos containing material themselves, proper precautions should be taken by wearing personal protective equipment (P100 cartridge respirator and protective disposable clothing) and follow work practices to protect themselves and prevent contamination of their house. Work practices in state statutes can be found in the Kansas Asbestos Control regulations at http://www.kdheks.gov/air-asbestos/resources/ks_asbestos_regulations.pdf under K.A.R. 28-50-9. At a minimum the removal of asbestos containing material should be completed in a wet condition and the waste material placed in 6 mil plastic bags. Disposal of friable asbestos containing waste should be at a landfill that is approved to accept friable asbestos containing material.