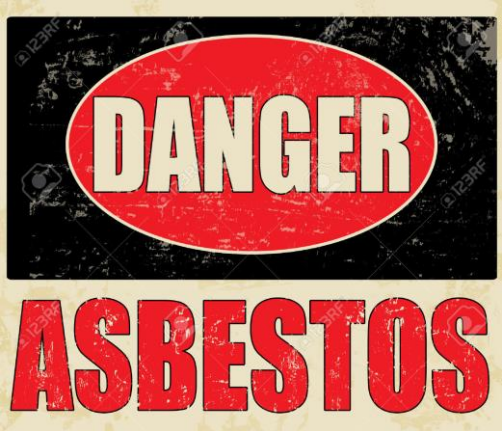
TOOLBOX TALK
NO.36

Asbestos



Why is asbestos dangerous?

- Asbestos still kills around 5000 workers each year, this is more than the number of people killed on the road.
- Around 20 tradesman die each week as a result of past exposure
- However, asbestos is not just a problem of the past. It can be present today in any building built or refurbished before the year 2000.

When materials that contain asbestos are disturbed or damaged, fibres are released into the air. When these fibres are inhaled they can cause serious diseases. These diseases will not affect you immediately; they often take a long time to develop, but once diagnosed, it is often too late to do anything. This is why it is important that you protect yourself now.

Asbestos can cause the following fatal and serious diseases:
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.

Asbestos-related lung cancer - is the same as (looks the same as) lung cancer caused by smoking and other causes. It is estimated that there is around one lung cancer for every mesothelioma death.

Asbestosis - is a serious scarring condition of the lung that normally occurs after heavy exposure to asbestos over many years. This condition can cause progressive shortness of breath, and in severe cases can be fatal.

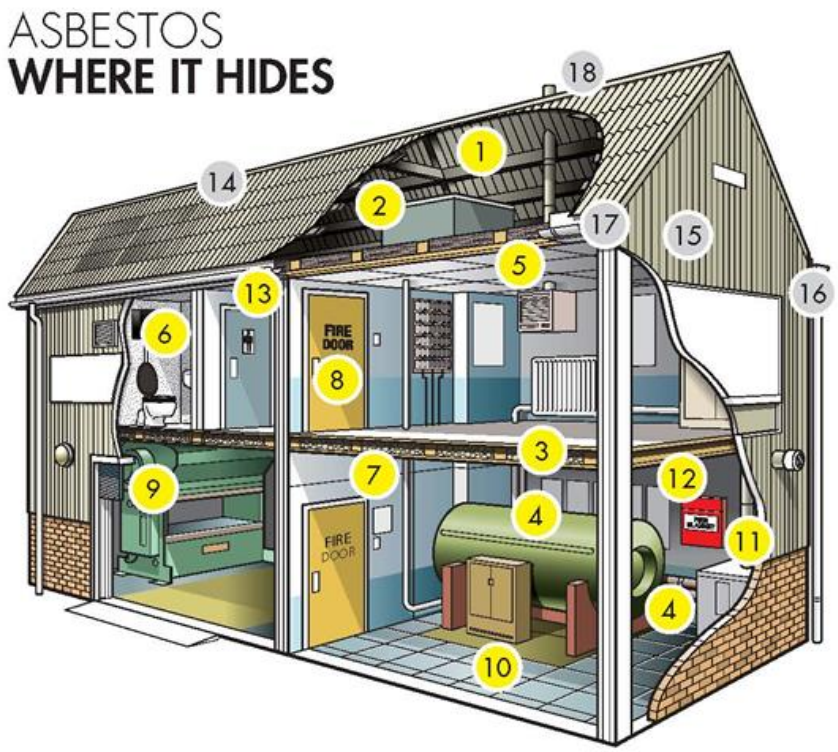
Pleural thickening - is generally a problem that happens after heavy asbestos exposure. The lining of the lung (pleura) thickens and swells. If this gets worse, the lung itself can be squeezed, and can cause shortness of breath and discomfort in the chest.

Note: It is also important to remember that people who smoke, and are also exposed to asbestos fibres, are at a much greater risk of developing lung cancer.

Where can you find asbestos?

Asbestos can be found in any industrial or residential building built or refurbished before the year 2000. It is in many of the common materials used in the building trade that you may come across during your work.

Industrial Property:



Inside

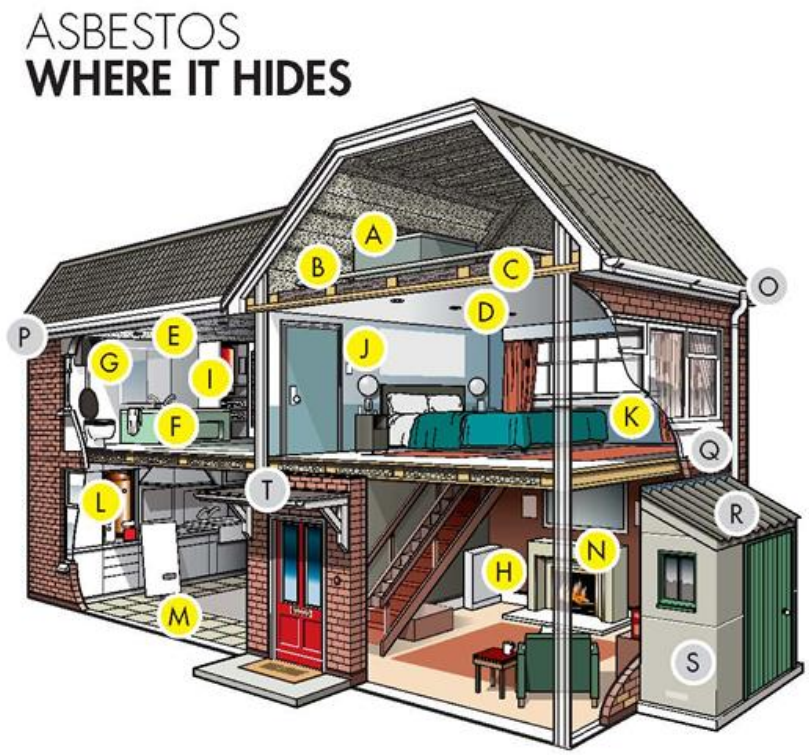
1. Sprayed coatings on ceilings, walls, beams and columns
2. Asbestos cement water tank
3. Loose fill insulation
4. Lagging on boilers and pipes
5. AIB ceiling tiles
6. Toilet seat and cistern
7. AIB partition walls
8. AIB panels in fire doors
9. Asbestos rope seals, gaskets and paper
10. Vinyl floor tiles
11. AIB around boilers
12. Textiles eg fire blankets
13. Textured decorating coatings on walls and ceilings eg artex

Outside

14. Asbestos cement roof
15. Asbestos cement panels
16. Asbestos cement gutters and downpipes
17. Soffits – AIB or asbestos cement
18. Asbestos cement flue

AIB = Asbestos Insulating Board

Residential Property



Inside

a. Asbestos cement Water tank
b. Pipe lagging
c. Loose fill insulation
d. Textured decorative coating eg artex
e. AIB ceiling tiles
f. AIB bath panel
g. Toilet seat and cistern
h. AIB behind fuse box
i. AIB airing cupboard and/or sprayed insulation coating boiler
j. AIB partition wall
k. AIB interior window panel
l. AIB around boiler
m. Vinyl floor tiles
n. AIB behind fire

Outside

o. gutters andAsbestos cement downpipes
p. Soffits – AIB or asbestos cement
q. AIB exterior window panel
r. Asbestos cement roof
s. Asbestos cement panels
t. Roofing felt

AIB = Asbestos Insulating Board

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

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.
- If in doubt ask your supervisor
- Request Asbestos Awareness Training