

Asbestos is a naturally-occurring mineral fiber used in over 3,000 building construction products due to its strength and heat resistancy. Because asbestos has been widely-used, it can be found almost everywhere. And, contrary to popular belief, the use of asbestos has not been banned in many building products.

An uncontrolled disturbance of asbestos-containing material may be dangerous to your health.

Spokane Regional Clean Air Agency (Spokane Clean Air) is your local resource for asbestos-related requirements.



Get More Information

Spokane Regional Clean Air Agency has a variety of resources available, including:

- A list of certified abatement contractors and accredited laboratories in the area
- A series of "how-to" removal guides for Owner-Occupied, Single-Family Residence projects
- A "Renovation, Demolition and Asbestos" information sheet
- A webpage on asbestos: www.SpokaneCleanAir.org

For copies of these publications, please visit www.SpokaneCleanAir.org or call (509) 477-4727.



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working with you for clean air



Asbestos

*Is it a problem
in my house?*

Asbestos & Your Health

Asbestos fibers are more than 1,200 times thinner than a human hair. When inhaled, fibers become trapped in lung tissue, which may cause lung cancer or mesothelioma.

Asbestos is only a health concern if its fibers are released into the air. This can occur when asbestos-containing products are damaged or disturbed. There is no known safe level of asbestos exposure.

It is crucial to minimize exposure to airborne asbestos fibers.

As a precaution, all suspect materials should be treated as if they contain asbestos until it can be proven otherwise. Asbestos cannot be identified by looking at it. The only way to find out if a material contains asbestos is to have a laboratory analyze a sample.

Call First

Before any work is done please contact Spokane Clean Air to get the latest information on best practices and legal requirements for asbestos removal. Call (509)477-4727.

Minimize the Danger

If your project is taking place in a Owner-Occupied, Single-Family Residence*, you as the homeowner may remove asbestos yourself, but the process is not easy or inexpensive. Many homeowners find that hiring a certified asbestos abatement company is the better option. Homeowners who choose to do the asbestos removal project themselves must be prepared for the task.

If you do not qualify as Owner-Occupied, Single-Family Residence*, then you are required to hire a certified AHERA Building Inspector to perform an asbestos survey. If asbestos is found, then hire a certified asbestos contractor to abate or encapsulate the asbestos.

Identify Suspect Materials

Before starting a home renovation project, look for asbestos markings on the product or track the product back to the manufacturer. If these approaches don't work, submit a small sample for laboratory analysis.

You can hire a trained and certified AHERA Building Inspector to take and submit samples of materials for laboratory analysis or you can take samples yourself if you qualify as an Owner-Occupied, Single-Family Residence*.

Be sure to sample everything that may be disturbed during the renovation project.

If you decide not to check for asbestos, assume the material contains asbestos and treat it accordingly.

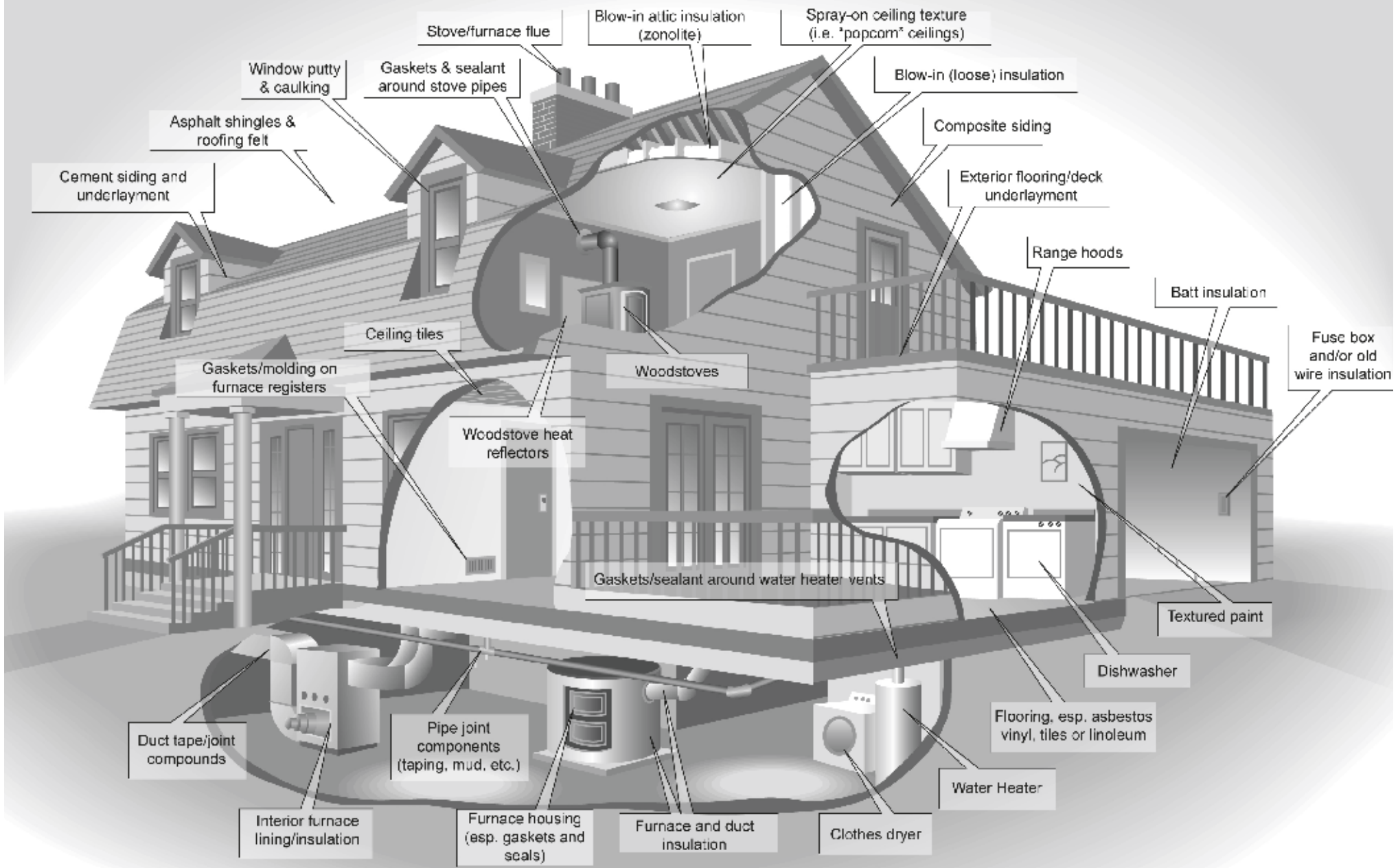
* An Owner-Occupied, Single Family Residence means any non-multiple unit building containing space used for living, sleeping, cooking, eating, etc., by one family who owns the property as their permanent and primary residence. Refer to Spokane Regional Clean Air Agency Regulation 1, Article IX for more information.

Sampling Steps

1. Spray down the materials with a mixture of dishwashing soap and water. Allow time for the liquid to soak in before taking the sample. This reduces the potential release of asbestos fibers.
2. Do not disturb the material any more than is necessary to take a small sample. After taking the sample, you can use a light application of hair spray to lock-down the area you sampled.
3. Place the sample in a clean air tight container such as a zip lock bag or small glass jar. Seal the container tightly. Use a damp disposable cloth to clean up any materials on the outside of the container or that might have spilled onto the floor. Never use a vacuum to clean up materials that may contain asbestos.
4. Clearly label the container, stating where and when the sample was taken.
5. Take the sample to a laboratory for analysis. Visit www.SpokaneCleanAir.org for a list of accredited laboratories.



Possible Locations of Asbestos in Your Home



Asbestos-containing material may be present in several locations in your home, but it is not a cause for concern as long as it is maintained in an undamaged state. The graphic above shows some of the common areas where asbestos-containing products may have been used in homes. Be aware of these areas should you need to repair or replace any of the items listed. To be safe, if any of these items are broken or damaged treat them as if they contain asbestos until you can prove otherwise through testing.

It's Asbestos. Now what?

Don't panic, there are options.

Options

1. Leave it alone.

Asbestos is only a problem if fibers are released into the air. Asbestos-containing materials that are not disturbed or damaged won't release fibers. The best option may be to leave it alone. For example, rather than remove sheet vinyl flooring with asbestos backing, it may be possible to install the new sheet vinyl on top.

If asbestos-containing materials are damaged or may be damaged during a remodeling project, then they should be repaired and encapsulated or removed properly.

2. Repair and Encapsulate.

Sometimes asbestos-containing materials can be repaired and encapsulated rather than removed. A few inches of torn, loose or frayed asbestos tape on heating ducts may be sealed with paint or duct tape. Damaged hot water pipe insulation can be covered with a special fabric available at safety equipment stores.

There are two types of encapsulants:

- Penetrating encapsulants seep into asbestos-containing materials and bond with asbestos fibers.
- Bridging encapsulating products such as paint, coat asbestos-containing materials with a more durable surface.

Homeowners should be aware that, although encapsulation seems like an attractive option, there may be less obvious risks involved. For example, painting may make a future removal more difficult. In cases involving extensive asbestos disturbance, removal by a certified asbestos abatement professional may be the more appropriate option.

3. Remove it.

There are two options for removal, each with distinct requirements.

- Hire a state-certified asbestos abatement contractor. This is required for all demolition work, and projects that don't qualify as an Owner-Occupied, Single-Family Residence.

Certified abatement contractors are trained in removal techniques typically unavailable to do-it-yourself home owners, making the removal more safe and effective. They also can perform air monitoring to ensure that the air in your home meets acceptable standards.

- Do it yourself. If your project is in the home you own and are currently living in (Owner-Occupied, Single-Family Residence) prior to and after the renovation, then you may remove asbestos yourself under specific guidelines.

Contact Spokane Clean Air to verify that you qualify as an Owner-Occupied, Single-Family Residence. If so, there are some projects that can be done safely if best work practices and legal requirements for asbestos removal are followed.

Some projects are very hazardous and should be performed by a certified asbestos abatement contractor.

Spokane Clean Air has "how-to" removal guides available for three common projects: cement asbestos-board siding, spray-on "popcorn" ceilings and sheet vinyl flooring. See the back panel for information about these and other resources.

