Protect yourself and your investment. Review this booklet prior to remodeling, repairing, or removing materials that may contain asbestos.

- Before remodeling, find out whether asbestos materials are present
- Asbestos that is in good condition should be left alone
- Improper sampling of asbestos can increase the risk of fiber release
- Sampling should be done by a trained professional
- Asbestos problems may be corrected by either repair (major or minor) or removal
- Generally, any damaged area that is bigger than your hand is considered a major repair
- Major repairs must be done by a trained professional
- Asbestos removal must be done by a trained contractor
- Check the credentials of asbestos professionals before you hire
- Asbestos contractors and consultants licensed in Arkansas are listed on ADEQ’s website
- Roofing, flooring, and plumbing contractors may also be licensed to handle asbestos
Asbestos in Your Home

The mere presence of asbestos in a home or building is not hazardous. However, asbestos materials may become damaged and release fibers over time which could then become a health hazard.

The best thing to do with asbestos in good condition is to leave it alone. Disturbing it may create a health hazard where none existed before. Read this booklet before you have any asbestos material inspected, removed, or repaired.

What Is Asbestos?

Asbestos is a mineral fiber that can be positively identified only with a special type of microscope. In the past, asbestos was added to provide heat insulation, fire resistance, and strength to a variety of products.

Until the 1970s, many building products and insulation materials used in homes contained asbestos. While most products made today do not contain asbestos, those that continue to be produced are required to be labeled with the potential hazards.

How Can Asbestos Affect My Health?

Breathing high levels of asbestos fibers can lead to an increased risk of:

- lung cancer
- mesothelioma, a cancer of the lining of the chest and the abdominal cavity
- asbestosis, a chronic lung disease caused by scarring in the lungs

We are all exposed to small amounts of asbestos in our daily lives and most people do not develop these health problems.

What Should Be Done About Asbestos in the Home?

If you think asbestos may be in your home, don’t panic. Usually the best thing to do with asbestos material that is in good condition is to leave it alone. There is no danger unless the fibers are released and inhaled into the lungs.

If you suspect materials may contain asbestos, check them regularly. Don’t touch, but look for signs of wear or damage such as tears, abrasions, or water damage. Asbestos fibers may be released if damaged material is disturbed by hitting, rubbing, or handling it, or if it is exposed to extreme vibration or air flow. Sanding, scraping, sawing, or simply repairing asbestos-containing materials increases the potential that harmful fibers will be released.

Slightly damaged material may be dealt with by simply limiting access to the area and not touching or disturbing the material. Discard damaged or worn asbestos gloves, stove-top pads, or ironing board covers.

If asbestos material is more than slightly damaged or if you are going to make changes in your home that might disturb it, repair or removal by a professional is needed. Before you have your house remodeled, find out whether asbestos materials are present.

How to Identify Asbestos

Unless it is labeled, you cannot tell whether a material contains asbestos simply by looking at it. If in doubt, treat the material as if it contains asbestos, or have it sampled and analyzed by a qualified professional who knows what to look for and can prevent the release of fibers.
If done incorrectly, sampling can be more hazardous than leaving the material alone. Therefore, taking samples yourself is not recommended. Material that is in good condition and will not be disturbed (by remodeling, for example) should be left alone. Only material that is damaged or will be disturbed should be sampled.

Sampling should be done by a trained professional who knows what to look for and who can prevent the release of fibers. Asbestos professionals licensed in Arkansas are listed on ADEQ’s website.

### Taking Your Own Samples

If you do choose to take the asbestos samples yourself, which is not recommended, take care not to release asbestos fibers into the air or onto yourself. Anyone who samples asbestos-containing materials should have as much information as possible on the handling of asbestos before sampling, and at a minimum, should observe the following procedures:

- Ensure no one else is in the room when sampling is conducted
- Wear disposable gloves and wash hands after sampling
- Shut down any heating or cooling systems to minimize the spread of any released fibers
- Disturb the material as little as possible
- Place a plastic sheet on the floor below the area to be sampled
- Wet the material using a fine mist of water containing a few drops of detergent before taking the sample
- Carefully cut a piece from the entire depth of the material using a small knife, corer, or

### Taking samples yourself is not recommended

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product that may have previously contained asbestos</th>
<th>How fibers may be released</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Steam pipes, boilers, furnace ducts insulated with an asbestos blanket or paper tape</td>
<td>• Damaged, repaired, or removed improperly</td>
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<tr>
<td>Resilient floor tiles (vinyl asbestos, asphalt, rubber), backing on vinyl sheet flooring, adhesives used for installing floor tile</td>
<td>• Sanding tiles • Scraping or sanding the backing of flooring during removal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cement sheets, millboards, and paper used as insulation around furnaces and wood-burning stoves</td>
<td>• Repairing or removing appliances • Cutting, tearing, sanding, drilling, or sawing insulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Door gaskets in furnaces, wood stoves, and coal stoves</td>
<td>• Worn seals</td>
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<tr>
<td>Soundproofing or decorative materials sprayed on walls and ceilings</td>
<td>• Loose, crumbly, or water-damaged materials • Sanding, drilling, or scraping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patching and joint compounds for walls and ceilings, textured paints</td>
<td>• Sanding, scraping, or drilling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asbestos cement roofing, shingles, and siding</td>
<td>• Unlikely unless sawed, drilled, or cut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artificial ashes and embers sold for use in gas-fired fireplaces</td>
<td>• Air currents created by downdrafts from a fireplace chimney or other activities that stir air</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fireproof gloves, stove-top pads, ironing board covers, certain hairdryers</td>
<td>• Long-term use or product age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Automobile brake pads and linings, clutch facings, and gaskets</td>
<td>• Damaged or worn</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
other sharp tool and place the small piece into a clean container (a small glass, plastic vial, or high-quality resealable plastic bag, for example)

• Tightly seal the container after inserting the sample

• Carefully dispose of the plastic sheets, use a damp paper towel to clean up any material on the outside of the container or around the area sampled, and dispose of asbestos materials according to state and local procedures

• Label the container with an identification number, clearly noting when and where the sample was taken

• Patch the sampled area with a piece of duct tape

• Send the sample to an EPA-approved laboratory for analysis

A list of EPA-approved laboratories is available from the National Institute for Standards and Technology’s National Voluntary Laboratory Accreditation Program, NVLAP.

Contact NVLAP by phone, (301) 975-4016; fax, (301) 926-2884; or email, nvlap@nist.gov. A copy of the list may also be requested by mail, 100 Bureau Drive, Stop 2140, Gaithersburg, MD 20899-2140. For more information, visit www.nist.gov/nvlap.

How To Manage an Asbestos Problem

If there is a problem with asbestos material, there are two types of corrections: repair and removal.

Repair usually involves either sealing (encapsulation) or covering (enclosing) asbestos material.

• Encapsulate (or seal) by treating the material with a sealant that either binds the asbestos fibers together or coats the material to prevent fiber release. Pipe, furnace, and boiler insulation can sometimes be repaired this way. This should be done only by a professional trained to safely handle asbestos.

• Enclose (or cover) by placing something over or around the material that contains asbestos to prevent release of fibers. Exposed insulated piping may be covered with a protective wrap or jacket.

With any type of repair, the asbestos remains in place. Repair is usually cheaper than removal, but it may make later removal of asbestos, if necessary, more difficult and costly. Repairs can either be major or minor.

Asbestos Dos

• Keep activities to a minimum in any areas with damaged material that may contain asbestos

• Take every precaution to avoid damaging asbestos

• Have removal and major repair done by professionals trained and qualified in handling asbestos; it is highly recommended that sampling and minor repair be done by professionals as well

• Install new floor covering over asbestos flooring that needs to be replaced, when possible

• Clean material tracked in the house with a wet mop

• Call an asbestos professional if the area to be cleaned is large

• Contact ADEQ’s Office of Air Quality Asbestos Section for information about asbestos training programs and asbestos in general

• Check with your local school district for information about asbestos professionals and training programs for school buildings

Asbestos Don’ts

• Dust, sweep, or vacuum debris suspected of containing asbestos

• Saw, sand, scrape, or drill holes in asbestos materials

• Use abrasive pads or brushes on power strippers to strip wax from asbestos flooring; never use a power stripper on a dry floor

• Sand or try to level asbestos flooring or its backing
• Track material that could contain asbestos through the house
• Try anything more than minor repairs even if you have completed a training course

**Minor Repairs**

Before undertaking minor repairs, be sure to follow all the precautions described in this guide and carefully examine the area around the damage to ensure stability. As a general rule, any damaged area bigger than the size of your hand is not a minor repair.

Always wet the asbestos material using a fine mist of water containing a few drops of detergent. Commercial products designed to fill holes and seal damaged areas are available. Small areas of material such as pipe insulation can be covered by wrapping a special fabric, such as rewettable glass cloth, around it. These products are available from stores that specialize in safety items.

Asbestos removal is usually the most expensive method and, unless required by state or local regulations, should be the last option considered in most situations. Removal may be required when remodeling or making major changes to your home that will disturb asbestos material or if asbestos material has extensive damage and cannot be repaired. Because removal poses the greatest risk of fiber release and is complex, it must be done by a contractor with special training.

**Asbestos Professionals:**

**Who Are They and What Can They Do?**

If you have a problem that requires the services of asbestos professionals, check their credentials carefully. Hire professionals who are trained, experienced, and reputable. Before hiring, ask for references from previous clients and find out if the clients were satisfied. Ask whether the professional has handled similar situations. Because charges can vary, get cost estimates from several professionals.

The federal government sets standards for asbestos professionals, and ADEQ follows these standards. Each person performing asbestos work in your home should provide proof of his or her certification in asbestos work and the company’s licensing as an asbestos firm. Check ADEQ’s website for lists of certified workers and licensed companies.

Asbestos professionals are trained in handling asbestos material. They can conduct home inspections, take samples of suspected material, assess its condition, advise what corrections are needed, and help determine who is qualified to make these corrections.

The type of professional will depend on the type of product and what needs to be done to correct the problem. You may hire a general asbestos contractor or, in some cases, a professional firm trained to handle specific products containing asbestos.

Some firms offer combinations of inspection, consulting, testing, assessment, abatement, and correction. A professional hired to assess the need for abatement or corrective action should not be connected with an asbestos-abatement firm. It is better to use two different firms so there is no conflict of interest. Services vary from one area to another.

Though private homes are usually not covered by the asbestos regulations that apply to schools and public buildings, professionals should still use procedures described during state-approved training. Homeowners should be alert to the chance of misleading claims by asbestos consultants and contractors. There have been reports of firms incorrectly claiming that asbestos materials in homes must be replaced. In other cases, firms have encouraged unnecessary removals or performed them improperly. Unnecessary removals are a waste of money and improper removals may actually increase the health risks to you and your family. To guard against this, know what services are available and what procedures and precautions are needed to do the job properly.

In addition to general asbestos contractors, you may select a roofing, flooring, or plumbing contractor licensed to handle asbestos. ADEQ maintains a list of Arkansas-licensed asbestos contractors and consultants at https://www.adeq.state.ar.us/air/program/asbestos/contractor.aspx. To request a paper copy, call (501) 682-0718.

Asbestos-containing automobile brake pads and
linings, clutch facings, and gaskets should be repaired and replaced only by professionals using special protective equipment. Many of these products are now available without asbestos.

If You Hire a Professional Asbestos Inspector

• Make sure that the inspection will include a complete visual examination and the careful collection and lab analysis of samples. If asbestos is present, the inspector should provide a written evaluation describing its location and extent of damage, and give recommendations for correction, abatement, or risk prevention.

• Make sure an inspecting firm makes frequent site visits to assure that a contractor follows proper procedures and requirements. The inspector may recommend and perform checks after the abatement work to assure the area has been properly cleaned.

For a list of Arkansas-licensed asbestos consultants who employ certified inspectors, call ADEQ, (501) 682-0718, or go to https://www.adeq.state.ar.us/air/program/asbestos/licenses.aspx.

If You Hire an Asbestos Abatement Contractor

• Check with the Occupational Health and Safety Administration (www.osha.gov/SLTC/asbestos/) of the U.S. Department of Labor, Little Rock Office, (501) 224-1841, and the local Better Business Bureau. Ask if the firm has had any safety violations. Find out if there are legal actions filed against it.

• Insist that the contractor use the proper equipment to do the job. The workers must wear approved respirators, gloves, and other protective clothing.

• Before work begins, get a written contract specifying the work plan, cleanup, and the applicable federal, state, and local regulations which the contractor must follow (such as notification requirements and asbestos disposal procedures). Contact ADEQ for Arkansas asbestos regulations.

• Be sure the contractor follows asbestos removal and disposal laws. At the end of the job, get written assurance from the contractor that all procedures have been followed.

• Make sure that the contractor avoids spreading or tracking asbestos dust into other areas of your home. The contractor should seal the work area from the rest of the house using plastic sheeting and duct tape, and turn off the heating and air conditioning system. For some repairs, such as pipe insulation removal, plastic glove bags may be adequate. They must be sealed with tape and properly disposed of when the job is complete.

• Make sure the work site is clearly marked as a hazard area. Do not allow household members or pets into the area until work is completed.

• Insist that the contractor apply a wetting agent to the asbestos material with a hand sprayer that creates a fine mist before removal. Wet fibers do not float in the air as easily as dry fibers and will be easier to clean up.

• Make sure the contractor does not break removed material into small pieces. This could release asbestos fibers into the air. Pipe insulation was usually installed in preformed blocks and should be removed in complete pieces.

• Upon completion, assure that the contractor cleans the
area well with wet mops, wet rags, sponges, or high efficiency particulate air (HEPA) vacuum cleaners. A regular vacuum cleaner must never be used. Wetting helps reduce the chance of spreading asbestos fibers in the air. All asbestos materials and disposable equipment and clothing used in the job must be placed in sealed, leak-proof, and labeled plastic bags. The work site should be visually free of dust and debris. Air monitoring (to make sure there is no increase of asbestos fibers in the air) may be necessary to ensure that the contractor’s job is done properly. This should be done by a firm not connected with the contractor.

For a list of Arkansas-licensed asbestos contractors, call ADEQ, (501) 682-0718, or go to www.adeq.state.ar.us/air/program/asbestos/contractor.aspx.

Do not dust, sweep, or vacuum debris that may contain asbestos. These steps will disturb tiny asbestos fibers and may release them into the air. Remove dust by wet mopping or with a special HEPA (high efficiency particulate air) vacuum cleaner used by trained asbestos contractors.

**Additional Resources**

**American Lung Association**
http://www.lungusa.org/

**Arkansas-licensed asbestos xontractors and consultants**
https://www.adeq.state.ar.us/air/program/asbestos/contractor.aspx

**Arkansas-licensed asbestos inspectors**
https://www.adeq.state.ar.us/air/program/asbestos/licenses.aspx

**Asbestos information**
www.ADEQ.state.ar.us/air/asbestos/asbestos.htm

**U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission**
www.cpsc.gov

**U.S. Department of Labor, Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA)**
http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/asbestos/

**U.S. Environmental Protection Agency**
Information about asbestos, its health effects, training for asbestos professionals, EPA regional and state asbestos contacts, and EPA-approved laboratories
http://www.epa.gov/asbestos/pubs/help.html#info

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**Statement by the American Lung Association:** The statements in this brochure are based in part upon the results of a workshop concerning asbestos in the home that was sponsored by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission and the American Lung Association (ALA). The sponsors believe that this brochure provides an accurate summary of useful information discussed at the workshop and obtained from other sources. However, ALA did not develop the underlying information used to create the brochure and does not warrant the accuracy and completeness of such information. ALA emphasizes that asbestos should not be handled, sampled, removed, or repaired by anyone other than a qualified professional.