



Asbestos

A guide for residents



City of Westminster

This guide aims to answer your questions on asbestos and what to do if you suspect there is asbestos in your home.

What is asbestos and why was it used?

Asbestos is a naturally occurring mineral. It is mined from rock and milled into fibres from which a wide range of materials are produced. Because it is strong and resistant to heat and chemical attack, asbestos containing materials have been used extensively in domestic and commercial building products.

If you are a tenant, contact Westminster City Council for a schedule detailing where asbestos may be located in your home. Lessees should consult their purchase records.

Is there any risk to me from asbestos containing materials in my home?

Asbestos containing materials are safe as long as they remain sealed in a good condition and are left undisturbed.

They become a potential hazard if they are disturbed or damaged and the fibres are released. These fibres can get lodged in the lung when breathed in and can cause lung disease and cancer.

How can I find out more about asbestos?

Tenants

Please contact Westminster City Council, which will be pleased to help.

Lessees

Westminster City Council is responsible for all asbestos in communal areas, and as a lessee you are responsible for the interior of your home which could potentially contain some asbestos.

Alterations to your home may disturb asbestos if this is present in your property. If you bought your property on the open market, you should consult your purchase documents to ascertain where in your home asbestos may be present.

If you are considering any of the following alterations, in addition to applying for landlords consent to the alterations, you should consider the risk of asbestos:

- Installation of central heating
- Installation of a new or replacement boiler
- Electrical works - installation of additional plug points, new fuse box, spotlights, replacement of gas oven with electric or vice /versa, power shower
- Repositioning of any plumbing such as toilet, sink and / or bath
- Removing structural or non-structural, stud or partition walls
- Installing new windows
- Erection of a fence, shed, lean-to or conservatory and extension.

What do I do if I suspect asbestos is present in my home?

Consult your survey and records of purchase. If you're still unsure, consult a professional, who may need to arrange an examination by a specialist contractor, to determine if asbestos is present.

The contractor will carry out a risk assessment and arrange for any necessary removal or safety measures required. On no account should you attempt to remove or repair asbestos materials yourself.

Please note: If you remove asbestos containing materials either by yourself or through a contractor, you are by law responsible for that waste being sent to a special waste tip. You will be asked to provide a 'Hazardous Waste Regulations 2005 Consignment Note' to this effect.

Further information can be found at Health and Safety Executive www.hse.gov.uk

If you are a lessee considering carrying alterations to your home, please contact Westminster City Council or complete the alterations application on our website www.westminster.gov.uk/housing

What safety precautions should I take?

If there may be asbestos containing materials in your home, it is important that you do not disturb them in any way. In particular you must ensure you do not carry out any of the following activities:

- Do not carry out any 'do it yourself' works on asbestos panels
- Do not disturb it by hammering nails into it
- Do not drill it either by hand or with power tools
- Do not sand it either by hand or with machine tools
- Do not scrape it or use a steam stripper
- Do not attempt to remove it.

If you're uncertain if it is safe to carry out DIY activities in any area of your home, please contact Westminster City Council.

What if panels at the locations listed are damaged?

If you're a tenant, you must immediately contact Westminster City Council, which will arrange for the damaged panel to be examined by a specialist contractor. The contractor will arrange for a sample of the material to be analysed. If it is found to contain asbestos, a risk assessment will be undertaken and the panel will either be removed or repaired and sealed. Lessees should arrange their own contractor.

The ability to assess whether residents are at risk from having disturbed asbestos containing materials in the past is limited. Most data relates to the effects on health of the people who have worked with asbestos in their job. For further information, please contact:

Westminster City Council

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