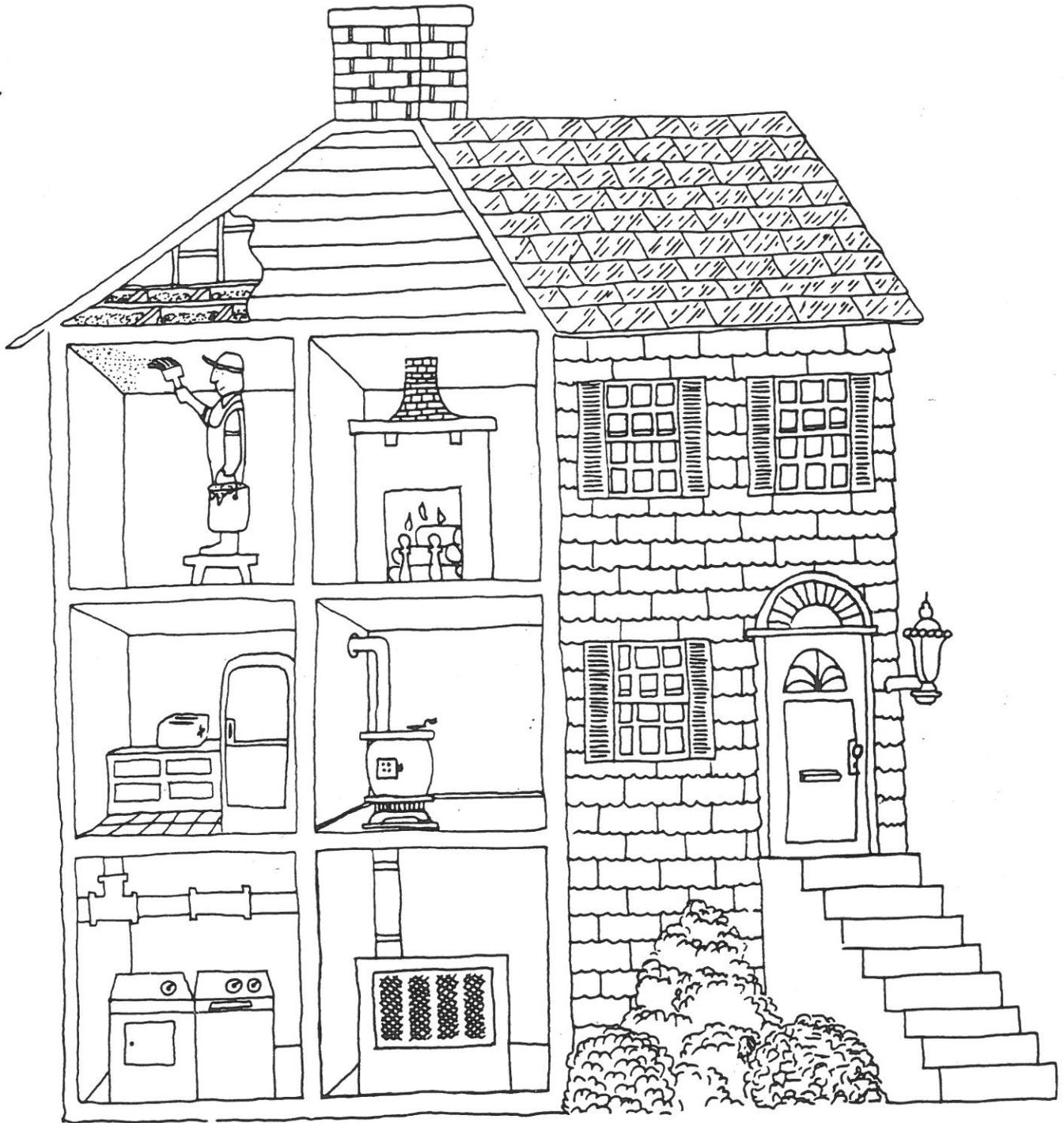


Asbestos in the Home



U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Asbestos in the Home



Revised - August 1989

U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Table of Contents

Questions Answered in this Booklet

What is asbestos?	4
Is asbestos dangerous?	4
Are all products with asbestos a health risk for consumers? ..	4
Do all people exposed to asbestos develop asbestos-related disease?	4
What hazards do cigarette smokers face when exposed to asbestos? Do they have a greater chance of developing lung cancer than smokers not exposed to asbestos?	4
Where is asbestos used in the home?	4
How can I tell if I have asbestos in my home?	4
If I find asbestos in my home, what should I do?	4
Vinyl Floor Tiles and Vinyl Sheet Flooring	5
Patching Compounds and Textured Paints	6
Ceilings	6
Stoves and Furnaces	7
Door Gaskets	7
Walls and Pipes	8
Appliances	9
Roofing, Shingles and Siding	9
How to Identify Asbestos	9
General Guidelines for Handling Products Containing Asbestos	10-11
More Information	12

Introduction

This booklet was prepared by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Its goal is to help consumers understand the possible hazards of exposure to asbestos and materials containing asbestos in the home. The booklet describes asbestos, where it may be found in the home, and the possible dangers of exposure to asbestos. The Table of Contents lists the questions answered in this booklet. If you have additional questions, you may call the toll-free number listed at the back of the booklet.

The Federal government is concerned about asbestos-containing products in the home because asbestos fibers may be released if these products are disturbed, as when a floor is sanded or a furnace removed. Recent studies have shown that the mere **presence** of asbestos-containing material in homes and buildings does **not** result in increased exposure of occupants. In contrast, disturbing or removing asbestos-containing products can result in release of asbestos fibers and must only be done under carefully controlled conditions by qualified and experienced persons.

This booklet will help you identify what materials in your home may contain asbestos. Leave these materials alone. Do not allow anyone to encourage you to remove materials that are in good condition simply because they contain asbestos. If left undisturbed, these materials do not present a threat to you or your family. When asbestos-containing materials must be disturbed because of renovation or remodeling, this booklet explains where to get expert advice and assistance. In general, the best advice is, "Leave asbestos-containing materials alone."

EPA and CPSC have already taken several steps to reduce your exposure to asbestos:

- In 1973, EPA prohibited the spraying of asbestos-containing materials for insulation, fire protection, and soundproofing.
- In 1975, EPA prohibited the use of asbestos for pipe covering if the material is easily crumbled after it dries.
- In 1977, CPSC banned two asbestos-containing products: patching compounds and artificial fireplace emberizing materials (ash and embers) containing respirable asbestos.
- In 1986, CPSC required labeling of products containing asbestos. These products include asbestos paper and millboard; asbestos cement sheet; dry-mix asbestos furnace or boiler cement; asbestos wood/coal stove door gaskets; asbestos laboratory gloves and pads; asbestos stove mats and iron rests; central hot-air furnace duct connectors containing asbestos; and bulk asbestos fibers. Asbestos products not labeled according to these provisions will be considered misbranded and thus may be subject to enforcement action by the Commission.
- In 1989, EPA announced a phased-in ban of most asbestos products, culminating in 1996.

If asbestos building materials must be removed from a home, this work must only be done by a qualified asbestos removal contractor. Many states now require asbestos contractors to be trained and certified. All repair of asbestos materials must be done with extreme caution.

Q&A

Q: What is asbestos?

A: Asbestos is a mineral fiber found in rocks. There are several kinds of asbestos fibers, all of which are fire resistant and not easily destroyed or degraded by natural processes.

Q: Is asbestos dangerous?

A: Asbestos has been shown to cause cancer of the lung and stomach according to studies of workers and others exposed to asbestos. There is no level of exposure to asbestos fibers that experts can assure is completely safe.

Some asbestos materials can break into small fibers which can float in the air, and these fibers can be inhaled. You cannot see these tiny fibers, and they are so small that they pass through the filters of normal vacuum cleaners and get back into the air. Once inhaled, asbestos fibers can become lodged in tissue for a long time. After many years, cancer or mesothelioma can develop.

In order to be a health risk, asbestos fibers must be released from the material and be present in the air for people to breathe.

Q: Are all products with asbestos a health risk for the consumer?

A: NO. A health risk exists only when asbestos fibers are released from the material or product. Soft, easily crumbled asbestos-containing material has the greatest potential for asbestos release and therefore has the greatest potential to create health risks.

Q: Do all people exposed to asbestos develop asbestos-related disease?

A: NO. Most people exposed to small amounts of asbestos do not develop any related health problems. Health studies of asbestos workers and others in occupational settings, however, show that the chances of developing some serious illnesses, including lung cancer, are greater after exposure to asbestos.

Q: What hazards do cigarette smokers face when exposed to asbestos? Do they have a greater chance of developing lung cancer than smokers not exposed to asbestos?

A: YES. Asbestos exposure and cigarette smoking together have been shown to cause a greater risk of lung cancer than either the risk of cancer produced by smoking or working with asbestos alone.

Q: Where is asbestos used in the home?

A: Asbestos has been used in a wide variety of products, including household and building materials, such as appliances, ceilings, wall and pipe coverings, floor tiles, and some roofing materials. Basically, asbestos has been used in products for four reasons: (1) to strengthen the product material; (2) for thermal insulation within a product; (3) for thermal or acoustical insulation or decoration on exposed surfaces; and (4) for fire protection.

Q: How can I tell if I have asbestos in my home?

A: The manufacturer of a product may be able to tell you, based on the model number and age of the product, whether or not the product contains asbestos. Or you may hire a qualified professional who is trained and experienced in working with asbestos to survey your home. Why hire a professional? Because:

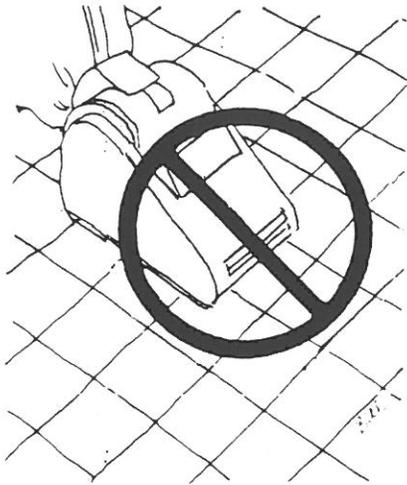
- A professional knows where to look for asbestos.
- A professional can take the sample properly and find out if there is asbestos.
- A professional can offer technical advice about what is the best thing to do.

It is essential to have a survey done **before** you start a renovation project so you will know if any materials in the renovation contain asbestos.

Q: If my home contains asbestos, what should I do?

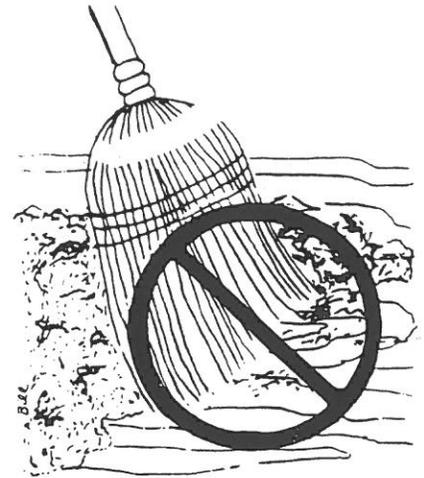
A: If the asbestos-containing material is not likely to be disturbed or is not in an area where major renovations are to occur, **it is best to leave the asbestos-containing material alone.** If the material is likely to be banged, rubbed, or handled—especially during remodeling—you should reduce your exposure as much as possible. This can be best accomplished by a qualified contractor who is trained and experienced in working with asbestos. In general, home repair contractors are not experienced in the proper procedures for handling asbestos. The numbers at the back of this booklet will help you locate a trained contractor to repair or remove asbestos-containing materials.

Vinyl Floor Tiles and Vinyl Sheet Flooring



Asbestos has been added to some vinyl floor tiles to strengthen them. Asbestos is also present in the backing on some vinyl sheet flooring. The asbestos is often bound in the tiles and backing with vinyl or some type of binder. Asbestos fibers can be released if the tiles are sanded or seriously damaged, or if the backing on the sheet flooring is dry-scraped or sanded, or if the tiles are severely worn or cut to fit into place.

When replacement or repair becomes necessary, follow the guidelines given on pages 10-11. The tiles should be handled as little as possible. Avoid sanding or otherwise damaging them. A safe and recommended alternative is to place a new flooring material directly over the old tiles or sheet.



For additional information, you may wish to read: "Recommended Work Procedures for Resilient Floor Covers," available on request from the Resilient Floor Covering Institute, 966 Hungerford Drive, Suite 12-B, Rockville, MD 20850. Enclose a business-size, self-addressed, stamped envelope for that publication.

Walls and Pipes

Pipe Insulation

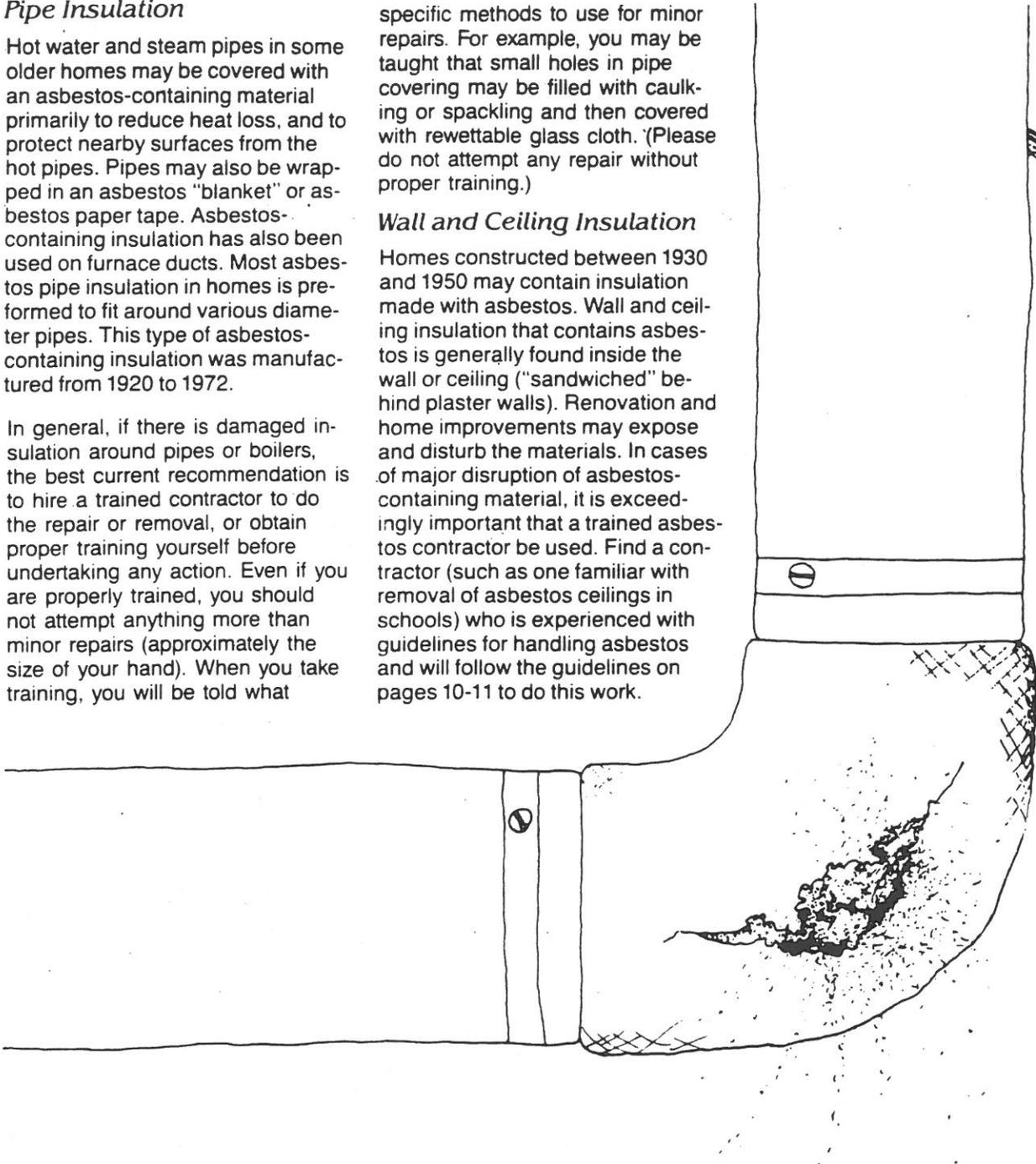
Hot water and steam pipes in some older homes may be covered with an asbestos-containing material primarily to reduce heat loss, and to protect nearby surfaces from the hot pipes. Pipes may also be wrapped in an asbestos "blanket" or asbestos paper tape. Asbestos-containing insulation has also been used on furnace ducts. Most asbestos pipe insulation in homes is performed to fit around various diameter pipes. This type of asbestos-containing insulation was manufactured from 1920 to 1972.

In general, if there is damaged insulation around pipes or boilers, the best current recommendation is to hire a trained contractor to do the repair or removal, or obtain proper training yourself before undertaking any action. Even if you are properly trained, you should not attempt anything more than minor repairs (approximately the size of your hand). When you take training, you will be told what

specific methods to use for minor repairs. For example, you may be taught that small holes in pipe covering may be filled with caulking or spackling and then covered with rewettable glass cloth. (Please do not attempt any repair without proper training.)

Wall and Ceiling Insulation

Homes constructed between 1930 and 1950 may contain insulation made with asbestos. Wall and ceiling insulation that contains asbestos is generally found inside the wall or ceiling ("sandwiched" behind plaster walls). Renovation and home improvements may expose and disturb the materials. In cases of major disruption of asbestos-containing material, it is exceedingly important that a trained asbestos contractor be used. Find a contractor (such as one familiar with removal of asbestos ceilings in schools) who is experienced with guidelines for handling asbestos and will follow the guidelines on pages 10-11 to do this work.



Patching Compounds and Textured Paints

In 1977, CPSC banned asbestos-containing patching compounds. Some wall and ceiling joints may be patched with asbestos-containing material manufactured before 1977. If the material is in good condition, it is best to leave it alone. Sanding and scraping will release asbestos fibers. If it is in poor condition, or if the wall or ceiling needs to be removed or repaired, follow the guidelines on pages 10-11.

Some textured paint sold before 1978 contained asbestos. It is unlikely that asbestos is being added to textured paint today, based on information obtained from manufacturers by the CPSC. As with patching compounds, textured paint is best left alone if undamaged. Sanding or cutting a surface with textured paint that may contain asbestos should be avoided.



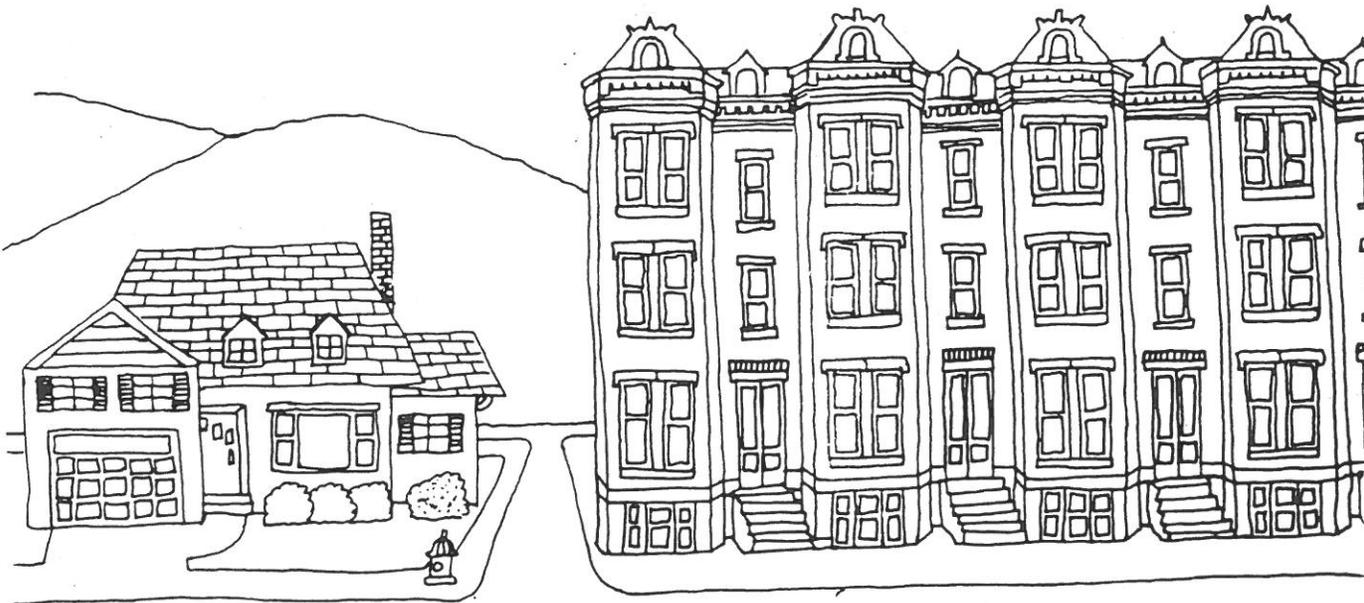
Ceilings

Some large buildings and a few homes built or remodeled between 1945 and 1978 may contain a crumbly, asbestos-containing material which has been either sprayed or troweled onto the ceiling or walls. If the material is in good condition, it is best to leave it alone. If the mate-

rial appears damaged, you may want to consider having it repaired or removed.

If possible, contact the builder or the contractor who applied the ceiling coating to determine whether asbestos-containing material was used. This may be difficult to do in

older homes. If you decide that it is necessary to remove this type of asbestos material, follow the guidelines on pages 10-11. The use of a trained asbestos contractor is highly advised when asbestos-containing material is to be removed.



Stoves and Furnaces

Stove Insulation

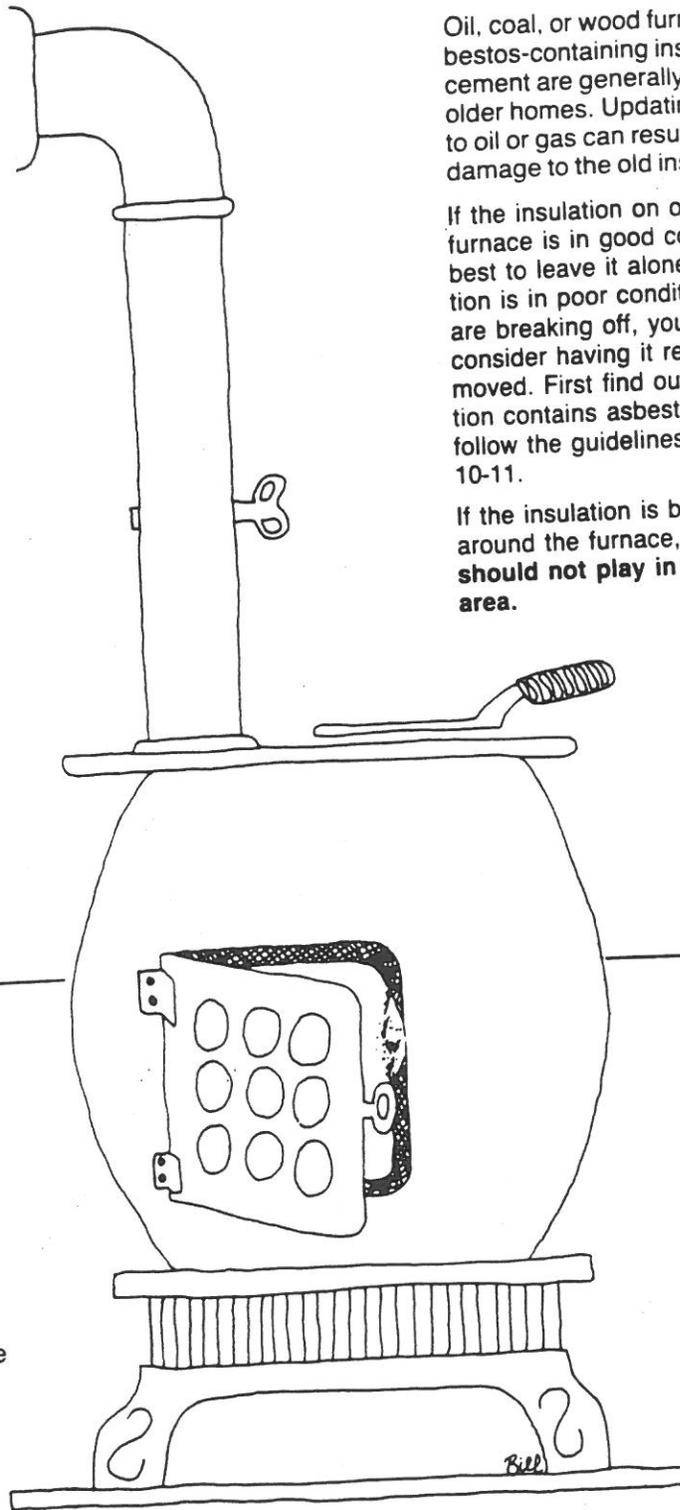
Asbestos-containing cement sheets, millboard and paper have been used frequently in homes when wood-burning stoves have been installed. These asbestos-containing materials are used as thermal insulation to protect the floor and walls around the stoves. On cement sheets, the label may tell you if it contains asbestos.

The cement sheet material probably will not release asbestos fibers unless scraped. This sheet material may be coated with a high temperature paint, which will help seal any asbestos into the material.

Asbestos paper or millboard are also used for this type of thermal insulation. If these materials have been placed where they are subjected to wear, there is an increased possibility that asbestos fibers may be released. Damage or misuse of the insulating material by sanding, drilling, or sawing will also release asbestos fibers. Suitable precautions should be taken (see guidelines on pages 10-11).

Door Gaskets

Some door gaskets in furnaces, ovens, and wood and coal stoves may contain asbestos. The asbestos-containing door gaskets on wood and coal-burning stoves are subject to wear and can release asbestos fibers under normal use conditions. Handle the asbestos-containing material as little as possible, following the guidelines on pages 10-11.



Furnace Insulation

Oil, coal, or wood furnaces with asbestos-containing insulation and cement are generally found in some older homes. Updating the system to oil or gas can result in removal or damage to the old insulation.

If the insulation on or around your furnace is in good condition, it is best to leave it alone. If the insulation is in poor condition, or pieces are breaking off, you may want to consider having it repaired or removed. First find out if the insulation contains asbestos; if it does, follow the guidelines on pages 10-11.

If the insulation is breaking off around the furnace, **children should not play in this dusty area.**

For more information on asbestos analysis and removal activities, contact the "asbestos coordinator" in the EPA Regional Offices at the following addresses:

Call the EPA TSCA assistance line (202-554-1404) to find out whether your state has a training and certification program for asbestos removal contractors and for information on EPA's asbestos programs.

EPA, Region I, (APT-2311)
Asbestos Coordinator
JFK Federal Bldg.
Boston, MA 02203
(617) 565-3835

Connecticut, Maine,
Massachusetts, New
Hampshire, Rhode
Island, Vermont

EPA, Region II, (MS-500)
Asbestos Coordinator
Woodbridge Ave.
Raritan Depot, Bldg. 5
Edison, NJ 08837
(201) 321-6671

New Jersey, New York
Puerto Rico, Virgin
Islands

EPA, Region III, (3HW-42)
Asbestos Coordinator
841 Chestnut Bldg.
Philadelphia, PA 19107
(215) 597-3160

Delaware, District of
Columbia, Maryland,
Pennsylvania, Virginia,
West Virginia

EPA, Region IV
Asbestos Coordinator
345 Courtland St., N.E.
Atlanta, GA 30365
(404) 347-5014

Alabama, Florida,
Georgia, Kentucky,
Mississippi, North
Carolina, South
Carolina, Tennessee

EPA, Region V (5-SPT-7)
Asbestos Coordinator
230 S. Dearborn Street
Chicago, IL 60604
(312) 886-6003

Illinois, Indiana,
Michigan, Minnesota,
Ohio, Wisconsin

EPA, Region VI (6T-PT)
Asbestos Coordinator
1445 Ross Avenue
Dallas, TX 75202-2733
(214) 655-7244

Arkansas, Louisiana,
Oklahoma, New Mexico,
Texas

EPA, Region VII (ARTX)
Asbestos Coordinator
726 Minnesota Ave.
Kansas City, KS 66101
(913) 236-2835

Iowa, Kansas, Missouri,
Nebraska

EPA, Region VIII (8AT-TS)
Asbestos Coordinator
1 Denver Place
999 - 18th Street
Suite 500
Denver, CO 80202-2413
(303) 293-1442

Colorado, Montana,
North Dakota, South
Dakota, Utah, Wyoming

EPA, Region IX, (T-5-2)
Asbestos Coordinator
215 Fremont Street
San Francisco, CA 94105
(415) 974-7290

Arizona, California,
Hawaii, Nevada,
American Samoa,
Guam, Trust Territories
of the Pacific

EPA, Region X, (8T-083)
Asbestos Coordinator
1200 Sixth Avenue
Seattle, WA 98101
(206) 442-4762

Alaska, Idaho, Oregon,
Washington

More Information

For more information on asbestos in appliances and other consumer products, call the CPSC Hotline (numbers below) or write to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, Washington, DC 20207. The CPSC Hotline has information on certain appliances and products (such as the brands and models of hairdryers that contained asbestos).

Call CPSC at 800-638-CPSC

A teletypewriter (TTY) for the deaf is available on the following numbers:
National TTY (including Alaska and Hawaii)—800-638-8270.
Maryland TTY only—800-492-8104.

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) is an independent regulatory agency charged with reducing unreasonable risks of injury associated with consumer products. CPSC is headed by five Commissioners appointed by the President with the advice and consent of the Senate.

This document is in the public domain. It may be reproduced in part or in whole by an individual or organization without permission. If it is reproduced, however, the Commission would appreciate knowing how it is used. Write to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, Office of Information and Public Affairs, Washington, DC 20207.

For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office