

AROUND THE HOUSE

Concerns over asbestos hit home

Asbestos is a mineral that has excellent binding qualities. It is a long-lasting, dependable material that isn't soluble in water and has been used successfully in building products, components and insulations for many decades. Asbestos was used in more than 2,500 different products.

In the 1980s, concerns surfaced about asbestos and its relationship to some cancers. Workers in some industries as well as miners were developing cancers caused by asbestos in the air they were breathing. These cancers affect the lungs and respiratory system. Public awareness evolved from testing in public and commercial buildings, schools and hospitals to testing in homes.

Once it was determined that asbestos could have a negative impact on the health of people who are exposed, the production of asbestos was banned for use as building materials, insulation, etc. Production of asbestos ceased in 1973 and its installation was banned after 1978.

Typical uses and locations found in homes are:

- Insulation — Rockwool insulation is found mostly in attics and sometimes in walls. Ovens, ranges, toasters,

dishwashers, heating pipes, ducts, boilers and furnaces would typically have insulations that contain asbestos during the years from about 1910 to 1975.

- Building materials — Asbestos in cement siding and roofing were very common in the 1940s and 1950s. Transit ductwork was used below concrete floor slabs, as chimney flues and as 1/4-inch thick sheets for fire protection.

- Vinyl — Asbestos floor tiles were the tiles of choice from 1930 to 1970. Ceiling tiles and some spray-on textured or popcorn ceilings have asbestos containing material (ACM). It isn't likely that you will find asbestos in a home that was built after 1978.

The main concern with the ACM is its condition. If the material is friable, which means the asbestos fibers can become airborne, it should be mitigated. Mitigation occurs in two forms: removal and encapsulation. Encapsulation involves sealing the asbestos off from damage.

The presence and type of ACM can only be determined by analysis under a microscope. It cannot be determined visually.

The mitigation process is very specific and the cost isn't much higher for

removal than it is for encapsulation.

Removal requires the following:

1. Prepare the area with positive airflow to the exterior to capture and discharge airborne particles to exterior. Small asbestos particles can remain airborne for days in still air.

2. Wet down the ACM as well as adjacent areas of concern, such as the floor.

3. Isolate the areas and the ACM. This is typically accomplished by building a plastic tent around part of the subject area. The tent is moved to isolate other areas with ACM as needed.

4. A proper respirator should be worn to capture the smaller ACM particles. Goggles and disposable coveralls should also be worn.

5. Removed ACM is captured in bags, transported in trucks designed for this use, and disposed of at designated hazardous waste locations.

6. The mitigator removes coveralls and then showers in a plastic tent in the mitigation area.

7. Air testing is performed after removal and cleanups to determine if there are asbestos particles in the air.

The cost for removal is specific to the contractor. However, in a residential situa-

tion, removal can be accomplished for \$500 to \$2,500 in most instances.

Around the House, by the AmeriSpec home inspection service of Plymouth, instructs homeowners about the basics of home maintenance and repair. If you have a question, write to: *Around the House/At Home*, The Eccentric Newspapers, 805 E. Maple, Birmingham 48009.

Asthma tips on roach antigens

BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Experts say tenants can keep their units reasonably roach-free, even if other apartments in the building are infested:

- First kill the roaches with sprays and poison baits.

- Wash down all the surfaces to get rid of roach antigens.

- Keep all food covered.

- Put out roach traps to catch the strays that wander in.

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