

## **FACT SHEET: Asbestos Insulating Boards (AIB)** (Accompanies “Asbestos” NSCA leaflet.)

**Please Note – *This Fact Sheet gives advice on how to recognise asbestos insulating boarding. It is not a substitute for professional inspection.***

### **What are the Risks?**

Asbestos materials were commonly used in buildings until the 1980’s. The risk to health from undisturbed insulating boards that are in good condition is very low. But, if the material is in a place where it is constantly disturbed or has to be worked on or fibres can easily be released, the risk to health is potentially high.

Because of this, the law requires that only a licensed contractor can work on, or remove AIB.

### **When & Where was Asbestos Insulating Board used in Houses and Flats?**

Asbestos insulating board looks similar to plasterboard and it was often used in the domestic building from the 1950s up to the middle of the 1970s for fire protection, thermal and acoustic insulation and even for general building work because it is resistant to damp movement.

It is not likely to be found in building constructed after 1982.

Some examples of the past uses asbestos insulating board:

- Very common in 1960s and 1970s system built housing
- Common in ducts, as fire breaks, infill panels, partitions, ceiling tiles, roof underlay, wall lining, bath panels, external canopies and porch lining.
- Also found in insulation board cores and linings of composite products used for sound insulation, boiler cupboards, partitions and ceiling panels, oven linings and suspended floor systems.

### **Identification**

Unless a product is marked as containing asbestos, it can easily be confused with plasterboard or non-asbestos insulating board (e.g. ‘Superlux’) or even asbestos cement panels.

Even though the common names for asbestos describe colours – white, blue, brown – this cannot be used as a guide to identify which type of asbestos is present or even to tell whether asbestos is present.

The only way to be sure if a board contains asbestos is by laboratory examination of a sample using an optical ‘polarising’ light microscope.

## **Asbestos Content**

Insulating boards (trade names 'Asbestolux' and 'Marinite') weigh around 700kg/m<sup>3</sup> and contain from 16-40% amosite (brown asbestos) or a mixture of amosite and chrysotile (white asbestos.) Crocidolite (blue asbestos) was also used in some boards up to 1965.

## **What to do if you think there is asbestos insulating board in your home.**

Danger comes from asbestos insulating board when it is damaged or disturbed. Then, fibres can be released into the air and breathed in. Boards are likely to produce dust if in a poor condition, damaged, drilled, sanded or sawed. Disturbance can free high levels of asbestos fibres.

If you are not sure if a material contains asbestos – **do not take chances** – assume that it is asbestos.

- Never break, work on or damage the material in any way
- Do not disturb dust around a damaged board.

## **Board in Good Condition**

If the board is whole and in good condition, and it's in a place where it can be left undisturbed, it does not present a hazard and it is safe to leave it where it is.

- Make a note of the possible risk on any plans that you have and if practical, mark the board in a place where it will easily be seen.
- Remember, you must protect any person who comes to work at your home and prevent them from disturbing the board, unless you have tested it for asbestos content and confirmed that it is safe.

## **Damaged Board**

If the material is damaged or likely to become damaged or the area needs to be worked in, action needs to be taken. Call a sampling laboratory or licensed contractor to sample and advise.

- If there is dust from the damage area or the board itself is flaky or powdery do not disturb it. Damp it down if necessary to prevent dust blowing around. Place the dirty cloth in a plastic bag, mark it as 'Asbestos' and seal it. **Do not put this is the ordinary rubbish.**
- Never use a domestic vacuum cleaner to clean the area. The filter of an ordinary machine will not remove asbestos fibres and they will be blown back into the air in to the room where you are working.

## **Sealing a Board**

If there is no visible dust or debris around a damaged board, and the damage is very slight, the surface can be sealed or painted.

- Paint with an initial coat of diluted PVA emulsion followed by one or two further undiluted coats.

- Never clean the surface with a wire brush or by sanding.
- Small breaks can be taped and small punctures patched with filler.

### **Protecting a Board from Damage**

Once the board has been sealed, you may want to protect it from damage by covering it with plasterboard. Label the suspect board as ‘Asbestos’. Do not damage the board by nailing the plasterboard to it! Also consider how you will prevent disturbance in the future, by yourself, or by others, who may not know that the board is there or realise that it could contain asbestos.

### **Removing Asbestos Insulating Board**

If asbestos insulating board needs to be worked on or removed you must call a licensed contractor.

Before any work begins, a sample **must** be taken to find the amount and type of asbestos contained in the board. This is used to establish the possible risk of asbestos contained in the board. This is used to establish the possible risk to health from the board when it is moved and the type of safety precautions that need to be taken.

### **Taking your own Samples**

If you have a piece of material, which has already broken off from the board, you can take it for microscopic examination at a certified laboratory. Damp down the material before you touch it and place it inside two sealed, labelled bags. Wash your hands afterwards.

Take it in person to the laboratory. Do not send a sample by post – no matter how well it wrapped.

### **Asbestos Waste**

Never put asbestos waste into the domestic waste collection. Only disposal sites, which have been specially authorised, are allowed to accept asbestos waste (see over for local disposal arrangements).

***The only way to be certain whether a board contains asbestos, and which type of asbestos it contains, is to sample it.***

The London Borough of Richmond Upon Thames Council does not provide an identification, stripping or collection service, but there are a number of companies locally who do. See page 4 and 5 for more details.

Never take your own sample without professional advice.

**If you would like a copy of this leaflet in large print, Braille on audio tape, or in a community language, please contact the communication unit on: 0208 891 7161**

Inclusion of company on this list **IS NOT** a recommendation by the council.  
See Yellow Pages or Thomson Directory's for more companies.

**Laboratories** (registered with the UK Accreditation Service)  
(Check their UKAS accreditation is current telephone: 0208 917 8555)

Air Surveys (testing only) College Mews, St Anns Hill Wandsworth, SW18 2SJ (0208 871 4577)	(Lab testing or sample at your home) ALcontrol Technichem Heathrow West Business Park, Heron Drive Parlaunt Road, Langley Slough, Berkshire. SL3 8XP (01753 212540)
(Lab testing or sample at your home) Eurofins Scientific Ltd 318 Worple Road Raynes Park (0208 946 8621)	

**Local Licensed Contractors:** Surveys, sampling, removal contractors **must**  
be licensed by the Health & Safety Executive)(**Check their license is**  
**current** – telephone: 08701 545500)

Abastra Asbestos Removal Service Ltd 19 Leigham Avenue, Streatham London SW16 2PT Licence No. 4910303483 (020 8677 4455)	Arton Ltd 5/6 The Broadway Manor Lane Sutton Surrey SM1 4BU Licence No. 4970304005 (0208 643 8821)
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Asbestech Ltd 2 Transport Avenue Brentford TW8 9HF Licence No. 1980204105 (0208 569 7777)	TB Insulations Ltd 88 Broad Lane Hampton Licence No. 4840000548 (0208 941 3619)
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**Advice on Licensed Contractors and Health & Safety**  
Health & Safety Executive (HSE) 08701 545500

**Asbestos Waste Disposal Site for Richmond Borough**  
West London Waste Site 0208 841 4546  
Victoria Road  
South Ruislip

**The following organisations may be able to offer further advice on the safe handling of asbestos waste:**

ARCA - Asbestos Removal Contractors Association

ARCA House

237 Branston Road

Burton-on-Trent

Staffordshire

DE14 3BT

Tel: 01283 531126

NSCA - National Society for Clean Air

136 North Street

Brighton BN1 1RG

Tel: 01273 326313

