

Inside: All you need to know about asbestos

Humour: Words of wisdom and some thoughts for the day...

It's an issue that's been appearing in the media more and more and is known to cause deadly diseases such as mesothelioma and asbestosis.

Despite this, many unit owners and tenants are unaware of the risks they may be taking when scrubbing the walls of their apartments, drilling a hole for a picture frame or renovating their homes.

Earlier this year in the ACT, a shopping centre was forced to close periodically as asbestos fibres were detected in air conditioning ducts during work on the building. Not long after, the small Aboriginal community of Wallaga Lake Village, just south of Sydney was found littered with loose asbestos products found lying in the front and backyards of homes, underneath a community building and at the local tip.

As the issue of asbestos has become such a hot topic in today's society and still many people not understanding the serious implications of inhaling the deadly asbestos fibres, we have prepared some information that you can pass on to the unit owners and tenants of the buildings you manage.

What is asbestos?

Asbestos is a natural material made up of tiny heat resistant fibres. It has been extensively used in the construction of buildings, ships and many other fire resistant products. If inhaled, the fibres can become lodged in the lungs, leading to mesothelioma, asbestosis or lung cancer.

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Could this happen to you?

Below are some Australian incidences of asbestos-related diseases...

One of the most recent case studies of an asbestos related death has sparked concerns among the Australian public.

Patrick Hanley, a 73 year old father of seven dies on Sunday 31 May 2009 as a direct result of asbestosis-related diseases and throat cancer. Patrick was exposed to asbestos in the 1960's after handling bags of the mineral fibre on Sydney's waterfront.

Another recent Australian case is that of Helene Edwards. Helene, at age 57 was awarded \$803,403 by the Dust Disease Tribunal of New South Wales. She was exposed to asbestos while installing fibro sheeting in her home more than 20 years ago. The mother of three has been diagnosed with mesothelioma and has been given a maximum of two years to live.

Helene Edwards' solicitor, Tanya Segelov stated that research shows Australia used more asbestos per person than any other nation in the world. One in three dwellings and buildings built prior to 1982 contained asbestos in wall and ceiling insulation, vinyl tiles and fibro-cement sheeting. Mrs. Segelov said that Mrs. Edwards' case set a precedent for legal action by other home renovators suffering asbestos-related diseases caused by exposure to the deadly fibres in their homes.

Asbestos... All your unit owners need to know, continued from Page 1...

Traditionally, the contraction of these diseases was linked to breathing contaminated air in workplaces either producing or using asbestos, or in buildings containing asbestos that were being renovated or demolished. Now, there is increasing evidence of people outside these workplaces contracting diseases such as mesothelioma from accidental contact with asbestos or asbestos containing materials.

What types of buildings may contain asbestos?

The *Australian Code of Practice for the Management and Control of Asbestos in Workplaces* [NOHSC: 2018 (2005)] states that the:

“Code of practice applies to all workplaces where ACM (asbestos containing materials) remain, or are likely to remain, in situ”.

The Code of Practice also states that buildings built prior to 1990 are more likely to have asbestos present.

Buildings with strata plan numbers 1 – 40000 should be checked for asbestos and asbestos containing materials as they were registered prior to 1991. Unit owners of these buildings should also be properly informed on how to safely handle asbestos in their units.

How to find out if your building contains asbestos:

It is a legal requirement that all buildings containing asbestos and being used as workplaces (buildings employing contractors, volunteers or employees working onsite) have an asbestos register available.

The register identifies any asbestos materials present, analysis results, inspection dates, details of materials presumed to contain asbestos and inaccessible areas of the building that may contain asbestos.

Solutions IE provides a full asbestos reporting service including an onsite inspection of common property areas for ACM, a written report covering asbestos products and an asbestos containing register to assist you with your legislative compliance.

The asbestos register is available for viewing by:

- Workers and their representatives
- Any other employees within the premises
- Any person removing asbestos from the location

- Any person engaged to perform work that may disturb the asbestos
- Any other person who might be exposed

The Body Corporate has a duty of care to ensure that the relevant people are given access to the register.

Safety checklist for dealing with asbestos in the home:

- Avoid drilling, cutting or using power tools on asbestos products.
- Do not wash asbestos products with highly pressurised water or scrub with a harsh broom or brush.
- Try not to damage asbestos material in any way.

What to do if your buildings contain asbestos or asbestos containing materials:

Asbestos is not dangerous to the health of individuals if it is left undisturbed and in a sound condition.

Removing asbestos

Since 1 January 2008 if you wish to remove asbestos yourself, you must hold a WorkCover license if you are removing or demolishing more than 10m² of asbestos materials.

For more information on removing asbestos please visit <http://www.nsw.gov.au/fibro/brochure.asp>

Other things to be aware of if your building contains asbestos:

- Damage to your asbestos roof as a result of hail.
- Weathering to asbestos products exposed to the elements.
- Fire damage to asbestos products caused by intense heat.

If you notice any of the above issues, it is necessary you contact a licensed asbestos removal contractor to properly remove any damaged asbestos material on your property. Please ensure anyone removing asbestos material onsite can confirm their compliance with the requirements for the *Safe Handling and Removal of Asbestos*, available from the National Occupational Health and Safety Commission (NOHSC) via the ASCC website www.ascc.gov.au

Summary

Diseases related to the inhalation of asbestos are predominantly fatal. To avoid contraction of the diseases, avoid disturbing asbestos and asbestos containing materials unless it is damaged and needs to be removed. Do not attempt to remove the asbestos product if you are not suitably prepared or qualified. In this instance, engage a contractor to dispose of the product safely. If you have not yet taken the necessary actions to be compliant with asbestos, please contact Solutions IE to talk about a total compliance solution on 1300 136 036. #

Building materials containing asbestos

Asbestos was commonly used in building construction prior to 1990. Below, we have compiled a list of building materials bonded asbestos may be found in.

- Exterior fibre cement cladding (fibro) and weatherboards (pre-1984).
- AC sheeting or asbestos cement sheeting used in walls and soffits.
- Artificial brick cladding.
- Flexible building boards – eave linings, bathroom linings and cement tile underlay (pre-1984).
- All corrugated cement roofing (Super 66).
- Flue pipes (pre-1984).
- Architectural cement pipe columns (pre-1984).
- Patched or repaired plaster.
- Textured paint.
- Vinyl floor tiles or coverings and wall tiles.
- Electrical switchboard backing boards.
- Fire doors.
- Vermiculite (the rough textured, grey coloured surface often used on stairway and hallway ceilings).

There may also be loose asbestos products in the following:

- Insulation on hot water pipes
- Insulation in old domestic heaters
- Insulation in stoves

Health risks related to the exposure to asbestos

There is a number of health risks directly related to exposure to asbestos. We have compiled a list below:

Asbestosis

- Asbestosis is a chronic and progressive lung disease caused by the inhalation of asbestos fibres over a long period of time. The symptoms of this disease may take between five and twenty years to develop.
- The inhaled fibres produce scarring of the lung, which cause the lung to stiffen and stop working properly.
- The disease causes breathlessness, tightness in the chest and persistent coughing. Skin may also develop a bluish tinge from lack of oxygen.

Lung cancer

- Risk is greater for those who smoke.
- Takes 10-20 years to develop after exposure to asbestos.

Pleural disorders

- Although symptoms may not be present in every case, the asbestos may produce thickened patches on the tissues that line the chest cavity (pleura).

Malignant mesothelioma

- This is a rare cancer that affects the pleura. The tumour begins in the pleura and spreads to the lung and chest wall.
- Can take 30 – 40 years to develop and diagnose.

Words of wisdom...

- How long a minute is depends on which side of the bathroom door you are on.
- Why is it that most nudists are people you don't want to see naked?
- No-one ever says "it's only a game" when their team is winning.
- I am in shape. Round in a shape.
- Never be afraid to try something new. Remember amateurs built the ark.
- Talk is cheap because supply exceeds demand.
- Politicians and diapers have one thing in common. They should both be changed regularly and for the same reason.
- There will always be death and taxes; however death doesn't get worse every year.
- I plan on living forever – so far so good.
- The real art of conversation is not only to say the right thing at the right time, but also to leave unsaid the wrong thing at the tempting moment.
- Brain cells come and brain cells go...fat cells live forever.
- Life not only begins at 40. It also begins to show.
- You don't stop laughing because you grow old. You grow old because you stop laughing.



Thoughts for the day...

- Why is it considered necessary to nail down the lid of a coffin?
- Why don't you ever see the headline – 'psychic wins lottery'?
- Why doesn't glue stick to the inside of the bottle?
- Why is it that doctors call what they do "practice"?
- Why can't they make planes out of the same substance as the little black box?
- If a person with multiple personalities threatens suicide, does that become a hostage situation?
- A bus station is where a bus stops. A train station is where a train stops. On my desk, I have a work station...
- If quitters never win, and winners never quit, who came up with – "Quit while you're ahead"?
- What hair colour do they put on the drivers licenses of bald men?
- Why don't they just make mouse-flavoured cat food?
- Whose cruel idea was it for the word "lisp" to have an "s" in it?

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