

## ASBESTOS IN YOUR HOME

**WHAT IS ASBESTOS?** Asbestos is the name given to a naturally occurring group of minerals made up of tiny, easily inhaled fibers.

**HEALTH CONCERNS?** Asbestos fibers can cause serious health problems. When asbestos gets in the air, breathing in the fibers can lead to an increased risk of (1) lung cancer; (2) cancer of the lining of the chest or abdominal cavity (mesothelioma); and (3) scarring of the lung tissue (asbestosis).

**WHERE IS IT FOUND?** Many types of building products and insulation materials used in homes before the mid-1980s contained asbestos. Common products that might contain asbestos include:

- STEAM PIPES, BOILERS, and FURNACE DUCTS insulated with an asbestos blanket or asbestos paper tape. The materials may release asbestos fibers if damaged, repaired, or removed improperly.
- CEMENT SHEET, MILLBOARD, and PAPER used as insulation around furnaces and wood-burning stoves. Removing appliances may release asbestos fibers. So may cutting, tearing, sanding, drilling, or sawing insulation.
- DOOR GASKETS in furnaces, wood stoves, and coal stoves.
- SOUNDPROOFING OR DECORATIVE MATERIAL sprayed on walls and ceilings. Loose, crumbly, or water-damaged material may release fibers. So will sanding, drilling, or scraping the material.
- PATCHING AND JOINT COMPOUNDS for walls and ceilings, and TEXTURED PAINTS. Sanding, scraping, or drilling these surfaces may release asbestos.
- ASBESTOS CEMENT ROOFING, SHINGLES, and SIDING. Do not saw, drill, or cut these materials.
- RESILIENT FLOOR TILES (vinyl asbestos, asphalt, and rubber), the backing on VINYL SHEET FLOORING, and ADHESIVES used for installing floor tiles. Sanding tiles can release fibers. So may scraping or sanding the backing of sheet flooring during removal.

### ASBESTOS DO'S AND DON'TS FOR THE HOMEOWNER

- **DO** have removal and major repair done by people who are trained, qualified, and equipped to handle asbestos. We highly recommend that minor repair and taking samples to test for asbestos also be done by asbestos professionals. To find qualified asbestos professionals go to the following website:  
<http://epi.publichealth.nc.gov/asbestos/ahmp.html>
- **DON'T** remove materials that may contain asbestos without proper personal protective equipment and environmental controls. ***If materials that may contain asbestos are damaged by flooding, leave them in place until they can be removed by asbestos professionals.***
- **DON'T** dust, sweep, or vacuum debris that may contain asbestos.
- **DON'T** saw, sand, scrape, or drill holes in asbestos materials.
- **DON'T** use abrasive pads or brushes on power strippers to strip wax from asbestos flooring. Never use a power stripper on a dry floor.
- **DON'T** sand or try to level asbestos flooring or its backing. When asbestos flooring needs replacing, install new floor covering over it, if possible.
- **DON'T** track material that could contain asbestos through the house. If you cannot avoid walking through the area, have it cleaned with a wet mop. If the material is from a damaged area, or if a large area must be cleaned, call an asbestos professional.
- **DO** keep activities to a minimum in any areas, such as crawl spaces or attics, having damaged material that may contain asbestos.
- **DO** take every precaution to avoid damaging asbestos or materials that may contain asbestos.

**For more information,** contact the N.C. Health Hazards Control Unit at (919)707-5950, or for more information on dealing with hazards left by flooding, see the NC DHHS website at:

<https://www2.ncdhhs.gov/hurricanes/afterflood.htm>