



## CONSUMER NEWS

# SAN DIEGO CITY ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

May 2013

*ALERT TO HOMEOWNERS WHO  
PLAN TO REMODEL:*

*ASBESTOS, WHAT IS IT, WHERE  
IS IT AND HOW DOES THAT  
AFFECT ME:*



*WHAT IS IT?:*

Asbestos is a naturally occurring silicate mineral fiber material that is very strong and has great resistance to heat.

Because of this, Asbestos has been a common ingredient in many applications where heat resistance is necessary. Its use in residential building and commercial

applications was virtually unlimited until the 1970s when the adverse health effects became known.

Around 1978, Asbestos use in home manufacturing was prohibited. However, many products that contained Asbestos were still being manufactured and used in home applications.

*WHERE IS IT?:*

Prior to the prohibition of Asbestos in homes, it was most commonly found in popcorn ceiling coatings, insulation and floor tiles.

Other applications included electrical equipment, roofing materials, cement siding materials, appliances, fake fireplace logs, and heating and air duct lining and insulation.

Commercial applications commonly involved many items similar to those referenced above. Additional uses may have included insulation for commercial furnaces and cooking applications. Navy ships for example used Asbestos coatings on steam pipes, electrical

wiring and numerous other applications for many years.

Today Asbestos is still in use in the manufacturing of some brake pads, gaskets and other automotive parts, commercial pipe insulation, and some roofing tiles; among other uses. The manufacturing process however is designed to minimize the risk of exposure.

*WHAT IS THE DANGER?:*

Studies indicate the danger of Asbestos comes from inhalation of disturbed fibers. Most of the items that contain Asbestos do not emit fibers in their original state. Rather the Asbestos must be in a “friable” state.

The National Emission Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants (NESHAP) defines “friable” as any material containing more than 1% Asbestos that, when dry, can be crumbled or reduced to powder by hand pressure. (Subpart M 40 CFR part 763 section 61.140)

*HOW DOES THAT AFFECT ME?:*

Homeowners should never attempt to remove or disturb any Asbestos-containing material. As noted above, the danger is not in the undisturbed material in its original state, but rather the airborne fibers which pose a health hazard.

In California, only contractors who have specialized training are allowed to work with Asbestos.

This is not a law to ignore. Asbestos is dangerous and should only be handled by certified professionals.

Any construction work on homes built before 1978 should include a test to determine the concentration of Asbestos.

If the test concludes that Asbestos is present in any concentration over .01%, and the work includes 100 square feet or more of construction, then a certified Asbestos contractor must be used. (See, generally California Labor Code section 6501.8(b), and California Business and Professions Code section 7058.5)

This means, for example, that a room that is 10x10 or larger, with a popcorn ceiling with a makeup of .01% (one-tenth of one percent) or greater concentration of Asbestos, would require a certified Asbestos contractor for removal.

Consumer Tip: A quick search on the California Industrial Relations website will determine if your contractor is properly certified to handle Asbestos.

Here's a link to that website:  
<http://www.dir.ca.gov/databases/doshacru/acrusearch.html>

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**San Diego  
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Consumer and Environmental  
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This newsletter was written by  
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The information provided in this newsletter is intended to convey general information and is not intended to be relied upon as legal advice.

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The San Diego City Attorney's Consumer & Environmental Protection Unit prosecutes criminal and civil violations of California's unfair competition and false advertising laws committed in the City of San Diego. The Unit maintains a Phone Hotline for consumers to report possible violations. You can reach the Hotline at (619) 533-5600.