

Asbestos

What is Asbestos?

Asbestos is a naturally occurring mineral which was used to make asbestos cement products in Western Australia between 1921 and 1987. Asbestos cement was used in many products in the building industry, such as roofing, fencing, floor tiles and exterior wall cladding.

Manufacture of products containing asbestos was discontinued due to health risks. Materials containing asbestos do not usually pose a health risk if they are intact and are left undisturbed. The use of power tools for cutting, drilling, grinding, sanding and sawing or cleaning with high pressure water guns may release fibres into the air and should therefore be avoided at sites where asbestos products have been used.

As the use of asbestos products cannot be determined by sight, the only way to ascertain whether a material contains asbestos is to send a sample for laboratory analysis. For information on where to send your sample go to the Asbestos Laboratory website at <http://www.asbestoslabs.com.au>. Building materials that may have been manufactured prior to 1987 should be regarded as potentially containing asbestos and be handled appropriately.

How to remove it

With the serious health implications associated with asbestos, the removal and disposal of asbestos should be undertaken by a professional. Bonded (non-friable) asbestos of under ten (10) square metres can be removed without a licence. Over 10 square metres or any amount of friable Asbestos must be removed by a licensed and trained individual or business. Should an individual choose to remove under 10 square metres, personal protective equipment and all necessary safety precautions should be utilised.

Some tips on how to tell the difference between Asbestos Super Six and Hardifence

Age of the building – most houses built before the 1980s are likely to have asbestos Super Six fencing installed but be aware that secondhand fencing occasionally has been used for newer properties, although the incidence of this is probably low; it's good advice to check the fencing.

The latest version of Hardifence has 5 ridges while Super Six has 7 ridges. Be aware, however, the early versions of Hardifence also had 7 ridges. The improved Hardifence has deeper corrugations and needs no washers as it comes with a metal capping to keep the sheets from separating.

Hardifence has its name printed on the edge of the product along with a date of manufacture; earlier styles are imprinted with 'manufactured without asbestos', also with a date mark.

If the fence has a fibre cement capping this is a sure sign the fence is asbestos.

For further information on personal protective equipment and how to dispose of asbestos safely, please refer to the Department of Health's leaflet *Asbestos Cement Products in the Home*

http://www.public.health.wa.gov.au/cproot/1364/2/Asbestos_in_the_Home_EHGuide.pdf

For information on where to dispose of Asbestos, please refer to the Department of Environment and Conservation's website

<http://www.dec.wa.gov.au/content/view/2875/1687>

Useful links: *Health (Asbestos) Regulations 1992*

http://www.slp.wa.gov.au/legislation/statutes.nsf/main_mrtitle_1545_homepage.html