

# PORTWAY HOUSING ASSOCIATION

## FACT SHEET

### Asbestos

**What is asbestos?**

Asbestos is a natural material that separates into strong, very fine, flexible fibres, which has strong resistance to heat and chemicals.

**Asbestos in buildings**

Before the mid-1980s many Australian homes including those owned by Portway Housing were built using materials that contained asbestos.

Asbestos was common in bathroom and toilet wall panelling, eaves, gables, insulation, roof coverings, kitchen splashboards, under rainwater tanks and on the backing of vinyl sheeting and vinyl floor tiles.

**Is asbestos safe?**

Asbestos-containing materials around the home usually present no problems as long as they are in good condition and are not disturbed.

However, sawing, sanding, grinding and drilling materials containing asbestos have the potential to expose people to asbestos fibres.

Exposure to asbestos fibres has been associated with a number of adverse health effects.

Any material in a home should be treated as if it could contain asbestos unless it has been properly tested and declared safe.

Building material	Activities that may release asbestos fibres
Fibre cement sheeting used for roofing, eaves, insulation, exterior and interior wall linings and fencing.	Sawing, cutting or drilling.
Stormwater pipes, downpipes, hot water service and heater flue and lagging, boilers and furnace ducts.	Damaged or improperly repaired or removed.
Vinyl asbestos, asphalt and rubber floor tiles or sheeting, underlay material and backing adhesives used for installation.	Sanding tiles and scraping or sanding the backing of sheet flooring during removal.
Cement sheet and paper used as insulation around fireplaces or wood burning stoves.	Repairing or removing appliances, cutting, tearing, sanding, sawing or drilling into insulation.
Soundproofing or decorative material sprayed on walls and ceilings.	Sanding, scraping or drilling or if material is loose, crumbly or water-damaged.
Textured paints.	Sanding, scraping, drilling.

**Asbestos do's and don'ts**

☑ DO	☒ DON'T
Be careful not to damage anything that may contain asbestos – <i>do not</i> cut, rip or sand materials containing asbestos.	Dust, sweep, or vacuum debris that may contain asbestos, unless using a Hepar type vacuum with respiratory equipment being worn.
Leave undamaged materials alone and, to the extent possible, prevent them from being damaged or disturbed.	Saw, scrape or drill holes in asbestos material unless wearing respiratory equipment.
Keep activities to a minimum in areas with damaged walls, floors or fixtures that might contain asbestos until the Maintenance has repaired the damage.	Use abrasive brushes or pads on power strippers to remove wax from an asbestos floor tile.
<i>Sensible caution is your best policy.</i>	Remove any vinyl sheeting or tile floor covering.
	Remove vinyl tiles or vinyl floor coverings as there may be asbestos content.

