



## FACTSHEET

# Locations Where Asbestos May be Present

### Introduction

Asbestos, a naturally-occurring silicate mineral, was once known as the 'miracle mineral' because of its fire-retardant properties. During the Industrial Revolution, asbestos mining and manufacturing boomed, particularly due to its use as insulation. Asbestos products later extended to items like bricks, fire-retardant coatings, concrete, pipes, fireplace cement, heat-, fire- and acid-resistant gaskets, fireproof wallboards, flooring, roofing, lawn furniture and wallboard compounds.

In the early 1900s, links between human exposure to asbestos and serious health problems were discovered. In the 1930s, the United Kingdom made a law that required ventilation in asbestos production areas, and officially recognised asbestosis as a work-related disease. America followed with similar laws approximately 10 years later. In 1960, New Zealand's then Department of Health announced that "there is some statistical evidence for an increased incidence in bronchogenic carcinoma" related to asbestos.

### Asbestos today

In 1984, it became illegal to import raw blue and brown asbestos into New Zealand. The use of asbestos-containing products in buildings and building materials became unpopular, although it should be noted that it is not illegal to import, sell, or use products containing asbestos.

Today, most of the people who are exposed to asbestos work in the demolition industry. Mechanics used to experience high levels of asbestos exposure because they worked with asbestos-lined brake pads and clutches, but these have mostly been replaced by other products, and their exposure to asbestos is much lower.

### Locations where asbestos may be present

Asbestos is most likely to be found in buildings that were constructed before the mid-1980s. People working in buildings built before this time should be aware that asbestos may be present in the following locations:

### Buildings

- asbestos-cement cladding and roofing
- backing material for floor tiles and vinyl sheets
- insulation board for thermal protection (for example, around fireplaces)
- ceiling tiles
- textured ceilings and sprayed-on wall surfaces
- lagging for insulation around pipes, heaters and hot water cylinders
- spouting for drainage and water supplies
- air conditioning ducts
- boiler gaskets
- door seals for ovens, kilns, furnaces and refrigeration units
- fire doors
- insulation blocks
- lift shafts
- plaster and plaster cornice adhesive

### Other things

- vehicle brakes, linings, and clutches
- oven gloves
- fire blankets and fire curtains
- high wattage insulation around electric light fittings
- electrical switch boards and ceramic fuses
- hair dryers – insulation around heating elements
- laboratory bench tops and fume cupboard panels
- locomotives
- industrial epoxy paints
- wall insulation for stoves
- welding rods



## Signs that a building contains asbestos

It is very difficult to identify the presence of asbestos by sight. However, as a general rule, if a building was constructed:

### BEFORE THE MID-1980S:

it is highly likely that it will have some materials containing asbestos

### BETWEEN THE MID-1980S AND 1990:

it is likely that it will have some materials containing asbestos

### AFTER 1990:

it is highly unlikely that it will have materials containing asbestos

The only way to be certain is to have a sample of the building material analysed. Refer to the factsheet [Asbestos: Workplace Exposure Standards and Monitoring](#) for further information about analysis.

## Managing asbestos risks in buildings

If your building is suspected or is known to contain asbestos, there are a range of things you can do to safely manage this hazard:

- Always identify materials that might contain asbestos before contracting tradespeople to undertake work.
- If in doubt, always arrange for building materials to be tested and analysed before work starts.
- Always liaise with tradespeople to ensure they undertake work safely and in compliance with the Health and Safety in Employment (Asbestos) Regulations 1998.
- People carrying out restricted work<sup>1</sup> involving asbestos must have a Certificate of Competence, or be under

<sup>1</sup> Restricted work means work in one or more of the following categories:

- work involving asbestos, if the asbestos concerned is friable and is or has been used in connection with thermal or acoustic insulation, or fire protection, in buildings, ships, structures, or vehicles
- work involving asbestos, if the asbestos concerned is friable and is or has been used in connection with lagging around boilers, ducts, furnaces, or pipes
- the demolition or maintenance of any thing, including a building or a part of a building, containing friable asbestos
- the encapsulation of materials containing friable asbestos
- the use, on asbestos cement or other bonded product containing asbestos, of
  - a power tool with any kind of cutting blade or abrasive device, except when it is used with dust control equipment, or
  - any other equipment whose use may result in the release of asbestos dust, except when it is used with dust control equipment
- dry sanding of floor coverings containing asbestos.

(Regulation 2, Health and Safety in Employment (Asbestos) Regulations 1998)

the direct supervision of a person with a Certificate of Competence.

- Always consult tenants, and if relevant, neighbours, about the work to be undertaken and any precautions required before work begins.
- Always leave undamaged asbestos material intact and undisturbed.

## Where to get help

The New Zealand Association of Consulting Laboratories has a list of members that conduct asbestos testing. Visit the [New Zealand Association of Consulting Laboratories website](#) for further information, or alternatively, consult the Yellow Pages.

For more information about managing asbestos in the work environment, contact the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment on 0800 20 90 20.

## Further information

- New Zealand Demolition and Asbestos Association/ Department of Labour. [Best Practice Guidelines for the Management and Removal of Asbestos](#). Available from [www.demolition-asbestos.co.nz](http://www.demolition-asbestos.co.nz).
- Department of Labour. [Asbestos: Personal Protective Equipment and Clothing](#).
- Department of Labour: [Asbestos: Workplace Exposure Standards and Monitoring](#).
- Department of Labour: [Asbestos and other Occupational Diseases in New Zealand: Annual Reports](#)

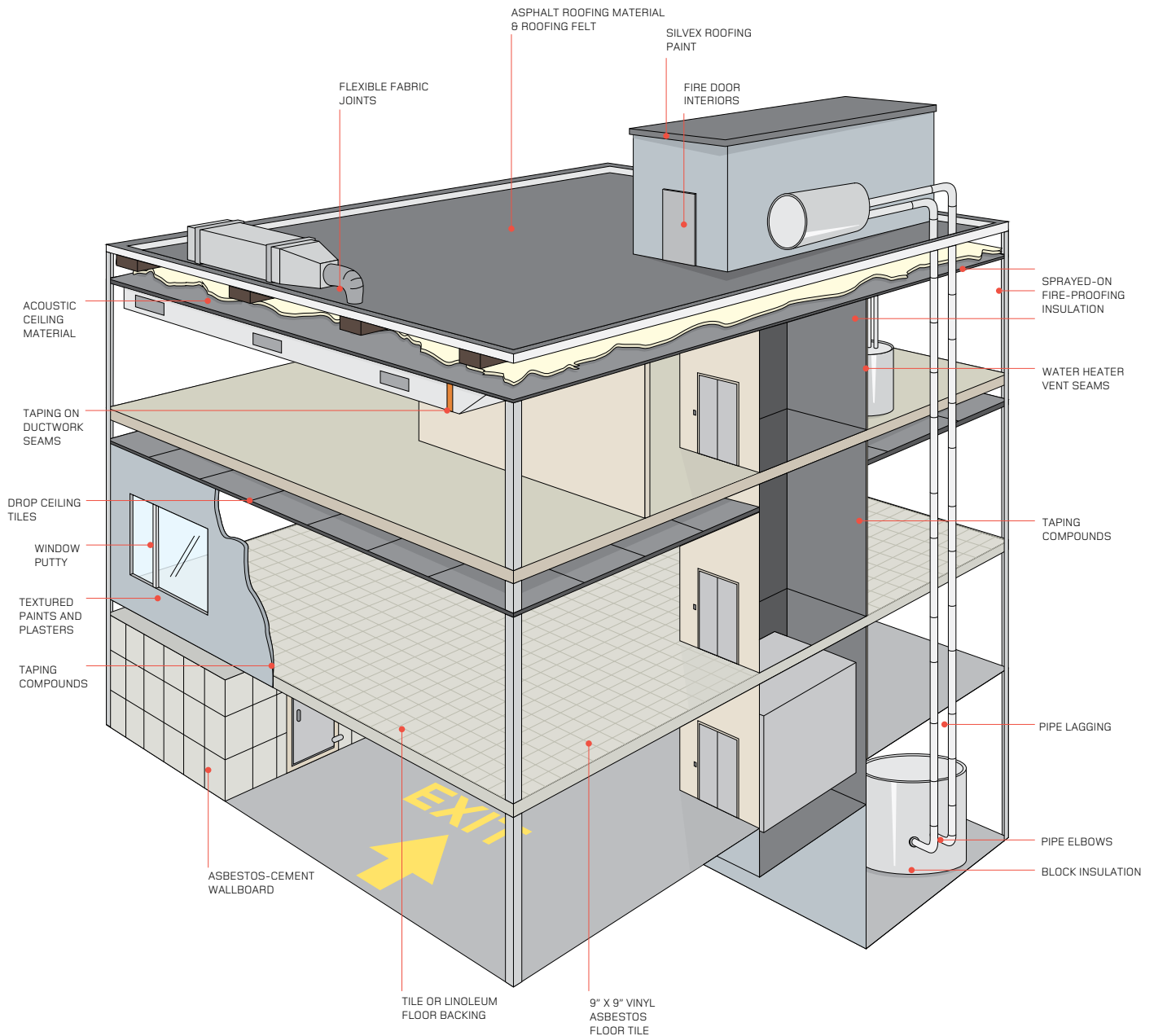


Figure 1: cut-away diagram of the façade and interior of a commercial building showing locations where asbestos may be present.