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Roofing and Siding Asbestos

What home roofing and siding products contained asbestos?

In the past, asbestos fibers were added during the production of roofing and siding materials to strengthen them, to increase their durability, and to provide a limited amount of insulation and fireproofing to your home. The use of asbestos in roofing and siding materials has declined rapidly since the early 1980s.

The following roofing and siding products have commonly been found in Minnesota homes:

Roofing Products

- Asphalt roofing felt
- Asphalt roofing shingles
- Cement roofing shingles
- Roof underlayment
- Sealants
- Flashing



Siding Products

- Wood shake vapor barriers
- Cement-asbestos board (Transite) siding
- "Slate" siding
- Mastics
- Adhesives
- Paint



How do I know if my roofing or siding contains asbestos?

Look for asbestos markings on the roofing or siding material or the packages in which they came, or call the manufacturer. Another alternative is to hire a Minnesota certified asbestos inspector to sample the material and submit it for laboratory analysis. You can find companies that perform asbestos sampling on MDH's [Find A Contractor or Consultant](https://asbs.web.health.state.mn.us/search/find-contractor.jsf) (<https://asbs.web.health.state.mn.us/search/find-contractor.jsf>) web page.

If you decide not to check for asbestos, you should assume the material contains asbestos and treat it accordingly.

Do I need to remove asbestos roofing and siding?

No. Just having asbestos siding and roofing on your home does not pose a hazard to your health. Asbestos-containing roofing and siding in good condition are best left alone. Damaged roofing and siding should be carefully repaired. Sometimes asbestos-containing roofing and siding can be covered with new materials. Check your local building codes.

Is working with asbestos roofing and siding hazardous?

Asphalt or cement roofing and siding that contain asbestos, when intact and in good condition, are generally considered nonfriable and are not hazardous. "Nonfriable" means they cannot be broken up by hand pressure. Paper-like vapor barriers can present more of a hazard, since they are considered friable. "Friable" means they are easily damaged by hand pressure.

However, heat, water, weathering or aging can weaken "nonfriable" siding and roofing to the point where they are considered friable. Also, the siding and roofing can be made friable when it's being removed. Friable materials can release asbestos fibers into the air. Avoid breaking, sanding, cutting, drilling and sawing the materials. These types of activities can release asbestos fibers into the air. Once airborne, asbestos fibers can be inhaled into the lungs, where they have the potential to cause severe lung diseases, such as mesothelioma and lung cancer.

How should asbestos roofing and siding be removed?

Homeowners may legally remove asbestos materials themselves from the single-family home they own and occupy. However, MDH **strongly** recommends using a Minnesota-licensed asbestos contractor (<https://asbs.web.health.state.mn.us/search/find-contractor.jsf>).

If you decide to do your own removal, at a minimum, you should do the following:

- Place plastic drop cloths around house to collect any debris from the removal.
- Keep others away from the area.
- Make sure you do not track the material into your house.
- Protect yourself (<http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/asbestos/homeowner/ppe.html>) by wearing a respirator with P100 cartridge filters. Do not use dust masks. Read the respirator manufacturer's instructions for proper use and fit. **MEDICAL WARNING:** You may not be medically able to wear a respirator. Check with your doctor first.
- Wear disposable coveralls or old clothing that can be disposed of at the end of the work.
- Wet the materials down before you begin removal and keep wetting while you are doing the removal. Keep the material wet until you place it in disposal containers.
- Avoid breaking up the roofing or siding. Work slowly to keep breakage to a minimum.
- Lower the materials to the ground. Do not drop or throw them.
- Place all waste and contaminated items in leak-tight bags, drums or wrap in 6-mil polyethylene sheeting.
- Wash off the tools you used.
- Thoroughly wash any exposed skin.
- Discard any coveralls or clothing that was worn during the work.
- Disposal of the waste - Check with your local waste hauler to see if they will dispose of the material. If they do not accept the asbestos waste, you will have to transport it to an approved landfill yourself. A list of landfills that accept asbestos (<https://www.pca.state.mn.us/sites/default/files/w-sw6-00.pdf>) in Minnesota can be obtained from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency.

How do I find out more information?

For more information about asbestos, contact the Asbestos Program (<http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/asbestos/contactus.html>) at MDH through the internet or by telephone at (651) 201-4620.

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