

# Asbestos

Anyone born in the late 19th century or even the early 20th century can attest that asbestos was a once excellent component for building use due to having a high resistance to fire, ability to absorb sounds, having great tensile strength and being chemical damage-retardant. Now that time and building products have advanced – along with breakthroughs in cancer research – people are truly finding out the harms that asbestos can do if exposed for prolonged periods of time. Knowing what breathing asbestos-filled air is scary enough yet pales in comparison to the fear of not knowing your home has asbestos within the walls and you've been living with it for years.

Johns Company, which is present-day Johns Manville, was one of the early manufacturers of this material. Fibrous anthophyllite was the main type used, although five other types of asbestos materials were knowingly mined during that era. Once inventors discovered the flame and chemical resistant nature of this material, it was manufactured as insulation which was then used in homes, to insulate pipes, as a drywall filler, and to coat fireplace walls. As time passed, people were suddenly exposed to the health hazards that asbestos brought from condensation hitting the asbestos then being passed into the air; some of these medical issues included breathing problems, irritations to skin, and eventually linked to cancer. In fact, the first known death due to asbestos exposure was recorded as early as 1906; today, asbestos has been the catalyst behind hundreds of thousands of known deaths, and continues to take the lives of the unaware.

Mesothelioma, the main disease in our era linked to asbestos exposure, is a horrifying killer of lung tissue, making breathing virtually impossible when it completely sets in. The United States government, although initially slow to act in banning this material from homes, has eventually restricted the use of this material to shipbuilding since it does have fire and chemical resistant properties associated with its composition. However, there are still a great number of homes that deal with asbestos lined fireplaces and piping that, when hot summer months kick in, can seep into the air faster and make breathing uncomfortable, which is where the disease of mesothelioma begins to run its course. Obviously, you want to have your home inspected for any trace of asbestos yet by the time it is actually removed, the damage has already been done and you may have already been stricken with its effects.

Today, you will rarely find a new home or remodeled older home have a trace of asbestos within its confines; however, just as the 9/11 incident which ended up leaking 1,000 tons – the equivalent weight of nearly 500 Ford F150's – of asbestos into the environment, you can never be too safe. By protecting your home with asbestos testing equipment or cleaning devices such as an air purifier, you will insure the safe breathing and longevity of your family while keeping your home free and clear of any trace of asbestos. Understanding the harmful effects of asbestos, too, can assist you in planning immediate evasive measures to prevent being attacked by this slow, painful killer.