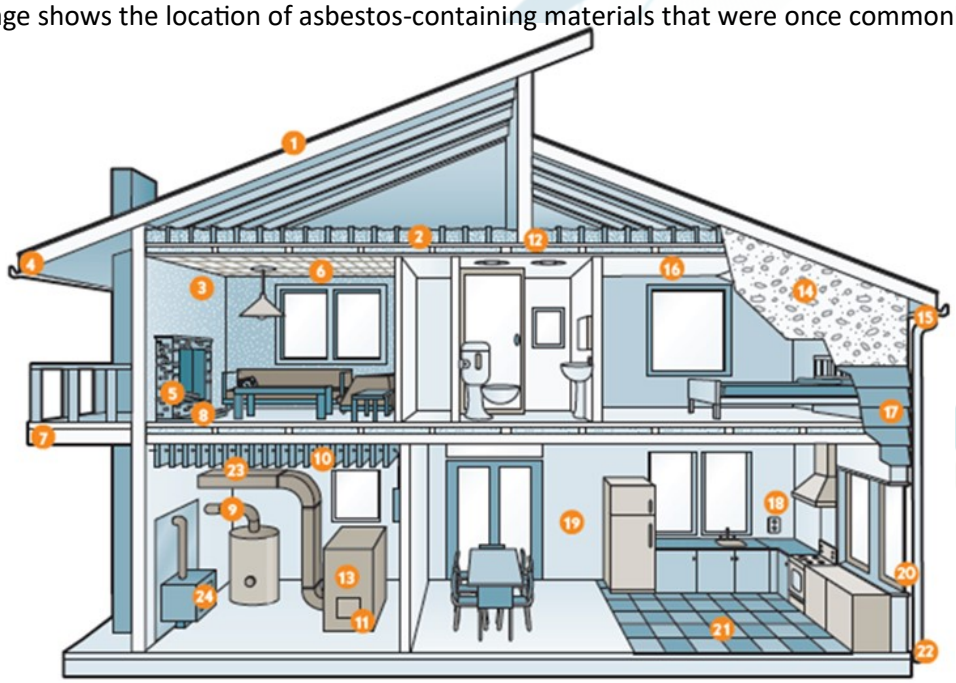
Preventing Asbestos Exposure- Everyone Has Responsibilities

Asbestos is a strong, fire-resistant mineral fibre. Before 1990, more than 3,000 products containing asbestos were used in residential and commercial building construction. As a result of being cost effective and durable, asbestos was used as insulation against heat and noise, and protection against fires. Today, when renovating or demolishing older homes or buildings, there is a high probability of encountering asbestos-containing materials.

When products containing asbestos are disturbed, fine fibres can be released into the air and without appropriate precautions, can be inhaled into the lungs. Once the fibres are lodged in the lungs, it can cause inflammation, scar tissue, and can escalate to breathing troubles. In some cases it can even lead to serious health conditions like asbestosis and various cancers, including mesothelioma, taking years or decades to become apparent.

Where could asbestos be located in a building?

The following image shows the location of asbestos-containing materials that were once commonly used in construction.



1. Roof felt and shingles
2. Loose, blown-in insulation, such as vermiculite
3. Incandescent light fixture backing
4. Roof gutters can be made of asbestos cement
5. Artificial fireplace logs and ashes
6. Acoustic tiles
7. Deck under-sheeting
8. Asbestos pad under the fireplace hearth
9. Pipe insulation
10. Main panel and fuse box; each fuse wire has an individual asbestos flash guard
11. Door and gasket covers
12. Backing behind recessed lighting
13. Boiler and furnace insulation
14. Asbestos can be found in stucco
15. Soffit boards can be made of asbestos cement or asbestos insulating board
16. Textured or stipple-coated walls and ceilings
17. Asbestos cement (transite) board siding and undersheeting
18. Outlets and switches
19. Gypsum board filling compound, and patching and joint compound for walls and ceilings
20. Window putty
21. Flooring: vinyl tiles and linoleum sheet flooring; flooring adhesive
22. Downpipes can be made of asbestos cement
23. Insulation on electrical wires
24. Heat reflector for wood stove

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Prevention Update

Section 49 of the *Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Act* General Regulations was updated in March 2020 and describes the minimum standard for working with and around asbestos or suspected asbestos containing material. For more information and resources, including the PEI Guide to Asbestos Management, visit wcb.pe.ca.

Compliance with these regulations is the law, and when followed, can prevent potentially deadly exposure to asbestos-containing material.

Are you a building owner, employer, contractor, manager or worker involved in renovations, construction, or furnace maintenance? If so, you have responsibilities under these regulations. Everyone in the workplace has a responsibility to comply with the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* General Regulations and ensure that asbestos containing materials are identified and abated in a safe manner whenever a renovation, restoration or demolition project is undertaken.

The regulations require asbestos-containing materials to be identified and abated in a safe manner whenever a renovation, restoration or demolition project is undertaken. Failure to do so may expose workers, occupants, and the general public to hazardous materials.

To ensure that your workplace is safe from asbestos exposure:

Inspect and Test for Asbestos

Certified asbestos contractors **must** ensure that a competent person inspects the worksite to identify asbestos, or other hazardous materials, that may be present. Only certified contractors can take samples or remove asbestos-containing materials.

Hire a Certified Asbestos Contractor

A signed copy of the Asbestos Notification Permit **must** be posted at the worksite by the certified asbestos contractor.

Develop an Asbestos Abatement Plan

When asbestos is present, owners and employers **must** develop and communicate a workplace Asbestos Management Plan to control and eliminate exposure for workers.

The Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee **must** review the Asbestos Management Plan on an annual basis and any recommendations from the Committee provided to the employer.

Dispose of Asbestos Properly

Waste materials containing asbestos **must** be disposed of at an approved waste management facility. The process for acquiring an Asbestos Disposal Permit is outlined in the *Environmental Protection Act* Waste Resource Management Regulations.

Visit wcb.pe.ca for a copy of the **PEI Guide to Asbestos Management** and a list of certified PEI asbestos contractors.

If you are aware of any asbestos abatement that is occurring at a workplace that does not have a permit posted, please contact the **24-hour OHS Emergency Line** at **902-628-7513**.

For more information, please contact:
Workers Compensation Board of PEI
Phone 902-368-5697
Toll Free 1-800-237-5049
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To report a serious workplace injury, contact the occupational health & safety line at 902-628-7513