

Identifying asbestos containing materials (ACMs)

An overview of common ACMs

The history of asbestos use in the UK dates back to the turn of the industrial revolution, in the late 1800s. The properties of asbestos make it ideal for use as thermal, acoustic and electrical insulation, fire and heat resistance, friction materials, and as a binding material. Common ACMs include the following*:



Loose fill asbestos

- Loose, fluffy insulation material.
- Used between cavity walls, under floorboards, in loft spaces and as packing around services passing through walls.
- Typically, blue-grey or off-white in colour.
- The HSE describe the material as 'probably the most dangerous ACM'.



Sprayed coatings

- Used for thermal, acoustic and anti-condensation insulation; and, as fire protection.
- Overspray is common.
- Used up until 1974.
- Can be damaged easily, particularly if not sealed.



Thermal insulation/ lagging

- Commonly found around heating pipework, boilers and calorifiers.
- Can be hand mixed and applied, and/or preformed sections.
- Used up until the mid-1970s
- Commonly encapsulated, but prone to damage.



Millboard

- Commonly used for thermal and electrical insulation, and fire protection.
- High asbestos content and low density means millboard breaks easily and is prone to abrasion and wear.

*N.B. this list is not exhaustive. Credit to [hse.gov.uk/asbestos](https://www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos) for images.

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Asbestos insulating board (AIB)

- Commonly used for fire protection, thermal and acoustic insulation, moisture resistance and as a general building board, amongst other things.
- Used from the early 1950s.
- Manufacturing ceased in the UK in 1980.



Woven cloth/ rope/ textiles

- Used for thermal insulation on pipework and boilers, jointing and packing, fire blankets and curtains, heat resistant gloves and clothing, and as fuse tapes, amongst other things.



Compressed asbestos fibre (CAF)

- Commonly used as gaskets on plant and machinery, including pipework and valves, and in automotive applications.
- Often cut to size from sheet material
- May be dry and damage easily when removed.



Friction products

- Commonly used for brake and clutch linings in the automotive industry and in plant and machinery.
- Found in elevator equipment.
- Used up to November 1999.

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Asbestos cement (AC)

- Including corrugated and flat sheets, and moulded products.
- Wide range of uses including roof sheets and tiles, wall cladding, soffit boards, flue pipes, bath panels, shuttering and portable buildings, amongst other things.



Textured coatings

- Used to produce decorative finishings to ceilings and walls, often referred to as trade names, such as 'Artex'.
- Typically have a painted finish.
- Manufactured with asbestos until at least 1984.



Thermoplastic/ reinforced plastic

- Used for products such as floor tiles, toilet cisterns, toilet seats, stair nosings and laboratory bench tops, amongst other things.

Useful information to assist in determining the likelihood of an ACM:

- Colour
- Dimensions (incl. thickness)
- Texture (e.g. rough, smooth, dimpled, hard or soft)
- Surface finishing (i.e. paint) and/or protection (i.e. wire mesh, metal cladding)
- Place/location of use
- Reason the material was being used
- Packaging and/or fixings
- Trade name(s)
- Markings and/or manufacturer stamps
- Whether the material was damaged
- Dustiness and/or visible fibre
- Date of installation/use
- Date of building construction