



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ASBESTOS DECISION-MAKING - SIDING

I am in the process of purchasing my first house. This house was constructed in the early 1960's and has siding on the exterior. How can I tell if the siding contains asbestos and how dangerous is asbestos siding, if present?

Exterior cementitious siding containing asbestos (usually contains 12-30% chrysotile asbestos) was used in both residential and commercial construction between the 1930's and the late 1970's (see attached Photos). Asbestos was added to the cement mixture in the siding because of the inherent strength, heat and fire resistant characteristics that the asbestos fibers provide. Siding is usually 1/8" thick and nailed in-place. Most times the siding has been painted.

Decision-making steps (prior to home purchase)

1. Have the siding tested to determine if it contains asbestos. Testing typically costs \$15.00-\$50.00 per sample.
2. If asbestos containing, inspect the condition of the siding for damage. Siding in good condition and not disturbed is not dangerous. Minor repairs can easily be performed by patching the siding with caulk and painted over with latex paint.
3. Assess your immediate and future renovation plans for the exterior of the house. Removal of siding should be performed by a licensed asbestos abatement contractor and typically costs between \$1.75-\$3.50 per square foot (depending upon the quantity and height of the siding above ground surface).
4. Negotiate your purchase price based on the financial impact of the siding and your anticipated remediation/repair plans. Asbestos siding is considered a Category II non-friable ACM by the EPA and its removal is regulated. States like NJ require the removal of asbestos siding before a structure can be demolished.

How dangerous is asbestos siding?

Siding in good condition will not release asbestos fibers into the air. Siding is outdoors, further decreasing the exposure potential from fiber inhalation.

Decision-making actions during home ownership?

1. Siding which is damaged should be repaired.
2. Large pieces of damaged siding should be wetted, picked up, placed in a plastic bags, sealed and disposed of.
3. Bare dirt areas below damaged siding should be free of debris and covered over (with clean dirt or sod).
4. Care must be taken when powerwasher cleaning of the siding. A low PSI washer should be used so not to abrade the siding surface.
5. Do not scrape old paint off siding as you may gouge the surface.
6. Do not sweep or use a household vacuum when cleaning up siding debris. Wet cleaning is preferred or use a specifically designed HEPA vacuum.
7. Limit/control any activities which disturb the asbestos siding including sanding, cutting, sawing, or drilling holes into the siding.
8. Removal of exterior siding should be performed by a licensed asbestos professional. Follow your state regulations/licenses for specifics. Siding removal is not a do-it-yourself project.

What precautions should be followed when removing asbestos siding?

Asbestos siding removal is classified as Class II asbestos work by OSHA's Asbestos Construction Standard 29CFR1926.1101. AET recommends the following work practices and controls when removing asbestos siding.

1. Close windows, doors, AC units and seal openings to the home interior.
2. The ground/dirt surfaces immediately below and extending about 5-10 feet from the structure should be covered with impervious plastic drop cloth.
3. An asbestos work area should be established by the use of asbestos warning tape to cordon off the work zone. Entry into the asbestos work zone should be limited to properly licensed and protected asbestos workers.
4. The siding should be sprayed with amended water prior to removal.
5. The siding should be removed where feasible intact (with minimal breakage) by removing the nails which secure the siding to the structure. Siding should not be allowed to drop to the ground surface.
6. Wetted siding should be placed into boxes then into 6 mil asbestos waste bags for proper disposal.
7. Any broken pieces of siding should be picked up and bagged as part of the daily removal process. Plastic drop cloths should be kept clean and replaced as needed.
8. Wet clean the underlying substrate and seal with an appropriate material.
9. Following removal of all siding, the structure should be inspected for remaining nails and any debris associated with the nails. Drop sheeting must be removed and bagged and the ground surface below inspected/cleaned of any suspect asbestos debris.
10. Exposure assessment monitoring should be performed throughout the removal process unless covered by a negative exposure assessment (NEA).

When you need professional help or advice email Alan Sutherland, CIH, CHMM at a.sutherland@aetinc.biz or call 610-891-0114. We provide nationwide services; phone consultations are free. Check out the full range of environmental contracting/consulting services on our website www.aetinc.biz.