



Asbestos in Domestic Properties - Asbestos Insulation Boards (AIB)

What are Asbestos Insulation Boards (AIB) and where are they found?

Asbestos Insulation Boards (AIB) are low density panels often containing a mix of white, brown and blue asbestos. They were primarily used as insulation panels on boilers, garage walls, ceilings, soffits, on the back of airing cupboard doors and the backs of other doors, to name but a few.

Are there any health risks associated with Asbestos Insulation Boards (AIB)?

AIB contains the more dangerous types of asbestos (blue and brown), but it is important to remember that if AIB is in good condition, and not being abraded, it will not be releasing any dangerous quantities of fibres.

In general, the amount of exposure possible in a domestic environment cannot be considered a measurable hazard. Please do not worry unduly if you find AIB in your property it is highly unlikely you have put yourself, or others, at risk. It is, however, sensible to monitor the condition of your AIB.

Do you need to remove you Asbestos Insulation Boards (AIB) by law?

There is no law demanding that you remove the AIB from your domestic property and any contractor who tries to force you to remove it citing legal obligations is trying to exploit your ignorance.

In domestic situations there is rarely any measurable risk to health from AIB but some people do feel more comfortable taking measures to prevent any fibre release.

It is important to remember there are always options to consider before complete removal, which can be disruptive and costly. Encapsulation is one option that will coat the AIB panels in a special paint preventing any future fibre release, rendering the panel inert (consult Asbestos Watchdog for approved coatings).

If you are selling your house, can your property become devalued Asbestos Insulation Boards (AIB) are present?

A common scam if you are selling your house is for a surveyor to suggest you have to remove your AIB; threatening you with devaluation of your property if you fail to comply.

You are under NO legal obligation to remove the AIB materials and if the AIB is in good condition, anyone threatening to devalue your property under the pretext of the new buyer having to remove the AIB once they move in is fraud.

Should the AIB be in poor condition, though not legally required, it would be sensible to have it rendered stable before selling your property; this protects you, your family, and prospective

buyers from any potential fibre release, as well as protecting yourself from exploitation by the surveyors. This can be done with approved coatings and does not involve costly removal.

Does the presence of Asbestos Insulation Board (AIB) in a house you are about to buy condemn it?

Any surveyor condemning a house you are intending to purchase because of the presence of AIB is providing you with incorrect information. Neither you nor the current owner is under any obligation to remove the AIB. The presence of AIB in good repair does not reduce the property's value; any surveyor trying to tell you different is either ignorant of the legislation, or trying to exploit your ignorance.

If the AIB is in disrepair, on moving into the property, it can be rendered inert by encapsulation with a special encapsulating paint which need not be a costly affair.

If you do want the AIB structure removed do you require a specially licensed contractor?

AIB is a licensed material and only specially licensed asbestos contractors can remove it if the work is to take longer than one hour. If the work is of substantial nature, you will need a specially licensed contractor to carry it out.

Be thorough in deciding whether you really want the AIB removed and wary when employing contractors; make sure you get a range of quotes to compare rates. Remember removal is not the only option; encapsulation with a suitable paint is often the most cost effective and efficient solution. However, the asbestos regulations do not apply to domestic property and with professional advice you are allowed to remove the AIB yourself.

If you have Asbestos Insulation Board (AIB) ceilings or walls, can you use power tools on them?

AIB is a licensable material, but any work that takes less than an hour in duration can be done by a competent individual, following the HSE's guidance protocols.

For adding light fittings, picture hooks, or similar by drilling or making holes, this will take less than an hour and therefore you can legally do this yourself, with no measurable risk to health.

If you do this work it is advisable to damp down surfaces before drilling or making holes, and wearing a mask to prevent inhalation of any dust in general.

The use of power tools such as sanders, or abrasive scrapers, on AIB, however, is not advised. Power sanders create large volumes of dust (irrespective of any potential asbestos content) and should not be used on asbestos containing materials.