



Asbestos in Domestic Properties - Loose Fibrous Asbestos Lagging

What is fibrous lagging and where is it found?

Loose fibrous asbestos lagging is where raw asbestos fibres (of any type; blue, brown or white) are sprayed onto structures such as pipes for insulation purposes. In domestic properties it is usually found insulating heating pipes in old houses.

Is there any risk to health from loose asbestos lagging?

Sprayed asbestos coatings are very friable (crumbly) and unlike the hard encapsulated products (such as asbestos cement) or products where the asbestos content is so low to be immeasurable to health, loose asbestos fibre lagging can be hazardous to human health.

Do you need to remove your loose asbestos lagging by law?

There is no law demanding that you remove the loose asbestos lagging from your domestic property and any contractor who tries to force you to do so by citing legal obligations is trying to exploit your ignorance.

However, as loose asbestos lagging can be hazardous to human health it is sensible to actively have a plan to manage your lagging; many people are more comfortable removing it all together.

It is important to remember there are options to consider before complete removal, which can be disruptive and costly. Encapsulation may be one option; this will coat the asbestos lagging preventing future release of fibres, or alternatively sealing the space containing the lagging may be a possibility.

If you are selling your house, can your property become devalued if loose asbestos lagging is present?

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

You are under NO legal obligation to remove the asbestos lagging.

What you may find, however, is some surveyors advise buyers not to complete on a house with such asbestos present, citing health reasons and expensive removal costs once they were to move in.

Although you are not legally obliged to remove or encapsulate your lagging, nor would the buyers once they moved in, you may find yourselves having to manage your lagging to ensure a sale. The health risks associated with loose asbestos fibres may put off potential buyers.

Does the presence of loose fibrous asbestos lagging 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 loose fibrous asbestos lagging in a house is providing you with incorrect information. Neither you nor the current owner is under any obligation to remove the loose fibrous asbestos lagging.

As asbestos lagging does have a measurable risk to health, surveyors may advise you not to complete on a house citing health risks and possible expensive removal costs.

This should not condemn the property, it is not always the case that expensive removal of asbestos lagging is required, other ways of managing the lagging and preventing fibre release, such as encapsulation, should be assessed properly. Solving the asbestos lagging problem need not be a costly affair resulting in condemned or devalued property.

If you do have the loose fibrous asbestos lagging removed, do you require a specially licensed contractor?

Loose fibrous asbestos lagging is a licensable material and removal of it should be conducted by a specially licensed contractor. However, the regulations do not apply to domestic property so you can remove the lagging yourself, though this should always be done with professional advice.

Be thorough in deciding whether you really want the loose lagging removed and wary when employing contractors; make sure you get a range of quotes to compare rates and remember removal is not the only option.