

DON'T PLAY RENOVATION ROULETTE WITH ASBESTOS

As November is Asbestos Awareness Month, it is timely for Master Builders director Michael McLean to remind homebuyers and renovators of the prevalence and dangers of asbestos.

ASBESTOS could be in any home built or renovated before 1987. Whether your home is constructed of weatherboard, brick, fibro or has external cladding, asbestos could be in it.

Asbestos can be found in kitchens, bathrooms, laundries and under-floor coverings such as carpets, linoleum and vinyl tiles, behind wall and floor tiles, in cement floors, internal and external walls, garages, ceilings, eaves, around hot-water pipes, fences, extensions to homes, outdoor toilets and backyard sheds. It could be anywhere.

The risk to families is when asbestos materials are disturbed or damaged, as this can release dangerous dust and fibres that can be inhaled. People put themselves and their children at risk if they are not aware of the hazards of working with asbestos materials, including fibro.

There are legal and safety requirements for the management of asbestos. Follow the regulations.

The cost of asbestos removal by a licenced professional is comparable in price to most licenced tradesmen, including electricians, plumbers and tilers. The cost of disposal at a lawful landfill is usually included when using a licenced professional removalist.

Importantly, if you find asbestos in your home: Don't cut it! Don't drill it! Don't drop it! Don't sand it! Don't scrape it! Don't scrub it! Don't dismantle it! Don't tip it! Don't waterblast it! Don't demolish it! And whatever you do, don't dump it!

With more and more people carrying out home handyman tasks around their homes, there is a real risk you could come into contact with asbestos. Don't play renovation roulette with asbestos materials or their dangerous fibres.

Do-it-yourself television shows might make renovating your old home look easy and straight forward, but unless you know what you're doing, you are taking a big risk

with your health and safety.

There is no safe level of exposure to asbestos fibres. Just sanding down an asbestos wall or fence or drilling a few holes could expose you to these lethal fibres.

Exposure to asbestos is now an established cause of a number of serious diseases such as asbestosis, lung cancer and mesothelioma. On average, one person dies every 12 hours from mesothelioma. To cause its ill-effects asbestos must be airborne and inhaled, however, its effects may not become apparent for many years.

With the highest rates of mesothelioma in the world, Western Australians need to heed the message and take care around asbestos-containing materials. Asbestos is not a thing of the past, it is still with us and will be for a very long time.

Master Builders conducts four-hour training courses to assist builders and contractors to obtain a Restricted Asbestos Removal licence. Contact our office on 9476 9800 for details.

The first step for homebuyers and renovators is to assess whether your house contains asbestos. If it does, don't take the risk in removing it yourself or disturbing its location. Leave that to the experts, which includes appropriately trained master builders and specialist contractors, including demolition companies. Asbestos also needs to be disposed of carefully at designated outlets.

The Asbestos Diseases Research Institute (ADRI) has published a lot of useful information about managing asbestos safely in your home. Visit www.asbestosawareness.com.au.

Reflections Through Reality is a not-for-profit organisation established in 2015, and aligned with Master Builders, supporting sufferers and increasing awareness of asbestos in our community. If you would like more information or to support their work, visit www.reflections.org.au.

