

Old Paint and Old Asbestos In Your House -- Maybe?

For many years now, those individuals buying older homes have been informed by inspectors, appraisers and the government that pre-1978 houses might contain lead-based paint and/or asbestos products.



The following general information applies to lead-based products and asbestos.

The manufacture of lead-based paint, applied for decades on both the exterior and the interior of homes, was discontinued in 1978; however existing product was used through 1982. In a related matter, up until the late 1980's, copper water supply pipes were "sweated" together with solder that contained some lead. Generally, that is considered to be a minor health risk but, if older copper pipes are present, it is recommended that water be run for a minute or more prior to collecting drinking or cooking water from a tap.

Asbestos products were commonly used for decades and it can be assumed that they might be present in homes that were built even up into the mid-1980's. Common building materials that sometimes contain asbestos are "popcorn" textured ceilings, acoustic tiles, linoleum or vinyl (which might have another surface over it), siding and vermiculite attic insulation or wrap or tape on heating ducts.

Lead-based paints and asbestos products are not necessarily considered to be problems as long as the surfaces are in sound condition and not disturbed -- not flaking or airborne.

Additional public attention was drawn to lead-based paint protocol in 2010. At that time, the EPA implemented a law that regulates the manner in which repairs and renovations must be performed, and the procedures that must be adhered to, at any home that was built prior to 1978. The law impacts both contractors and homeowners.