

Popcorn Ceiling Asbestos

Popcorn ceilings were very popular from the late 50s to early 80s and almost always contained asbestos. Removing a popcorn ceiling built during these years should be done professionally since the risk of asbestos exposure is high.

Popcorn / Acoustic Ceilings

Popcorn ceilings (also known as acoustic ceilings) were extremely popular in most homes built from the late 1950s right through the early 80s. It is uncertain as to why popcorn ceilings got to be so popular, but some explanations are that - it was easy to apply, it was a good noise damping agent, it hid imperfections in the ceiling, and a host of other reasons.

Popcorn ceilings had certain drawbacks such as difficulty in cleaning, but the biggest drawback today is the presence of asbestos in it. Almost all building material including cement, roofing, tiling, insulation, and paint from the 1930s right through the mid 80s contained asbestos in them.

Planning to Remove Your Popcorn Ceiling

If the popcorn ceiling in your home was painted before mid 1980s chances are very strong that it contains asbestos. If you are planning to get rid of this popcorn ceiling and give the ceiling in your home a fresh coat of paint, you must first know the risks involved in this.

When the popcorn ceiling is scraped to remove the paint, the asbestos contained in the paint will separate easily and get airborne. Levels of asbestos fibers in the room will get concentrated, and you will be forced to breathe in these carcinogenic fibers.

Even if you are subject to just a few days of inhaling these fibers in high concentration, they can get firmly lodged within your lungs and cause serious health problems later in life.

Asbestos Inhalation Health Hazards

The health effects caused due to asbestos inhalation will develop only 15 to 40 years after the first inhalation. Following are the most commonly known diseases caused by asbestos inhalation.

- Asbestosis
- Lung cancer
- Mesothelioma

All these diseases are usually associated with asbestos inhalation over long periods of time. There have been instances when even short term asbestos exposure has caused one of these diseases.

Asbestos exposure while scraping off a popcorn ceiling containing asbestos is very short term, but very concentrated at the same time. At all costs, you must avoid this.

Getting Your Popcorn Ceiling Tested for Asbestos

If you want to remove the popcorn ceiling in your home yourself, you must first get

the samples tested from a certified 'asbestos testing agency'.

To remove samples you should spray ample water on small patches of the popcorn ceiling in 3 to 4 different areas of the room / home. Using a blunt knife scrape out about 1 square inch of 'popcorn paint' from each area. Put these samples into individual sealable plastic bags.

If the results for asbestos is negative, you can go ahead and remove the popcorn ceiling yourself without any worries.

What if Your Popcorn Ceiling Contains Asbestos

In case the results for asbestos in your popcorn ceiling is positive, you should take extreme care.

The options available to you are to either get a fresh coat of paint over the existing asbestos paint without disturbing the previous paint, or getting rid of the asbestos containing popcorn ceiling and getting the ceiling repainted.

The first option is very risky, and in most of the states in the US, it is illegal to repaint a popcorn ceiling containing asbestos because rolling or spraying of paint over the old asbestos containing paint could dislodge and release asbestos fibers into the air.

The second option of getting rid of the asbestos containing popcorn ceiling and getting the ceiling repainted should not be done by you. The health risks involved in this are high. Even if you decide to get it done yourself you will have to take precautionary measures that will include using a respirator fitted with a HEPA filter, specified disposable clothing and glasses. You will then be required to dispose off all the asbestos containing debris in a suitable manner as specified by your county / state.

It is advisable to let a professional agency remove the asbestos containing popcorn ceiling and repaint it. They are trained and will make sure that neither is the environment in / around your home contaminated with asbestos fibers after the job is over. Disposal of all asbestos containing waste matter too will be taken care of by them as per the existing rules and regulations.

Getting a professional agency to remove your asbestos containing popcorn ceiling will be a very expensive affair, but considering the health risks involved in doing it yourself, it is surely worth it.