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Asbestos In Electrical Meter Boards

Asbestos is a naturally occurring mineral that was used in the manufacturing of building materials and other products in many industries because of its resistance to fire, heat, electrical and chemical damage. It was banned from all uses in 2003. Asbestos was commonly used in building materials prior to 1988. Asbestos was added to bituminous compounds in the manufacture of electrical backing boards in a similar manner to that used to manufacture asbestos cement sheeting (also known as 'fibro'). If your home was built before 1988, then your electrical meter board may contain asbestos-containing materials.

Asbestos is a known carcinogen and the inhalation of airborne asbestos fibres may cause asbestosis, lung cancer or mesothelioma. When non-friable asbestos-containing materials are maintained in good condition, then they present a negligible health risk. Nevertheless, safety precautions must be taken when working on any material that contains asbestos.

How do I know if my meter board contains asbestos?

The best indication of whether your meter board contains asbestos is the age of your home. If your home was constructed prior to 1988 and has not had the meter board replaced, then it may contain asbestos. Generally, asbestos-containing electrical boards are black in colour. Asbestos-containing meter boards were manufactured under several product names - Lebah, Ausbestos, Miscolite and Zelemite - and are classified as non-friable asbestos-containing materials. Your meter board may be stamped with one of these brand names.

If your meter board has been identified as potentially containing asbestos, then a caution sticker may have been placed on the board or inside your meter box.

Working on the meter board

Exposure to asbestos through the inhalation of airborne asbestos fibres is a health risk and may result in asbestosis, lung cancer or mesothelioma. Strict safety control measures are implemented when working with meter boards that may contain asbestos to ensure that workers and the public are not exposed to airborne asbestos fibres.

When employing an electrical contractor to work on your meter board, ensure that they are aware that meter boards can potentially contain asbestos, discuss the work that is required to be performed and how they will manage the potential risk of asbestos exposure. You should be satisfied that the electrical contractor will put in place the correct safety control measures to manage any potential risk to you or your family prior to him or her commencing work.

Replacing the meter board

Meter boards are the property of the owner of the premises. If you are concerned about asbestos in your meter board, or wish to replace it, then you should discuss this with the property owner. Replacement of asbestos-containing meter boards should be conducted by a licensed electrical contractor who is trained in working with asbestos-containing materials.

Meter board safety procedures

Depending on the work being conducted at your meter board, Contractors may apply the following asbestos safety controls

Site setup

- Barricading the work area to prevent unprotected persons from entering in the work area to ensure asbestos-containing dust is contained within the work area a decontamination area.

Undertaking work

Conduct work in accordance with Safe Work Procedures.

- Wear personal protective equipment (PPE) – including a P2 rated respirator and possibly disposable coveralls high hazard (H) type vacuum cleaner with a HEPA filter and attachments to capture any dust or swarf from drilling while the work is carried out by the electrical worker.

Decontamination

Decontaminating of the meter board by vacuuming, using a high hazard (H) type vacuum cleaner with a HEPA filter upon completion of the work.

Further Information;

More detailed information and a confirmation inspection can be carried out by your local Independent Property Inspector by calling the Toll Free Number 1800 17 88 22.