

DON'T RISK ANY EXPOSURE TO ASBESTOS

November is Asbestos Awareness Month. Master Builders director Michael McLean explains what the relevance is for homebuyers and renovators.

ANECDOTAL reports suggest at least one in every three established homes in Australia contains some form of asbestos. It is most likely to be in older homes and more than likely in your roof, insulation, fencing or walls.

With more and more people carrying out handyman tasks around their homes, there is a real risk that you could come into contact with asbestos. I would caution you not to play 'renovation roulette' with asbestos materials or their dangerous fibres.

Do it yourself television shows might make renovating your old home look easy and straightforward, but unless you know what you're doing, you are taking a big risk with your health and safety.

Asbestosis and mesothelioma are no longer 'old man's diseases' and aren't only limited to tradies, builders, roofers and mechanics, previously exposed to the deadly fibres during much of their careers.

The Asbestos Diseases Research Institute has reported an increasing number of mesothelioma victims, including women and children, were exposed to asbestos fibres in non-occupational settings such as home renovations and maintenance.

There is no safe level of exposure to asbestos fibres.

Just sanding down an asbestos wall, fence or drilling a few holes could expose you to these lethal fibres.

A study in the Medical Journal of Australia found 60 per cent of DIY renovators reported being exposed to asbestos dust.

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 in Australia.

To cause its ill-effects, asbestos must be

airborne and inhaled. However, its effects may not become apparent for many years.

With one of 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.

It is ubiquitous in the built environment and people need to be aware of its presence and treat it with extreme caution.

In Western Australia, a licence is required for the removal of materials that contain asbestos. The licence allows people to remove more than 10sqm of bonded (non-friable) asbestos.

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 builders and specialist contractors, including demolition companies.

Asbestos also needs to be disposed of carefully at designated outlets.

Aligned with Master Builders, Reflections Through Reality is a not-for-profit organisation established in 2015 to support sufferers and increase awareness of asbestos in the community.

If you would like more information or to support its work, go to www.reflections.org.au.

