



Media Release - SafeWork SA

Wednesday 26 August 2009

ADVICE ON ASBESTOS CONCERNS

SafeWork SA is advising people concerned about the possibility of asbestos in old carpet underlay to seek professional advice before having it removed.

It has been reported in the media that hessian bags, which were used to carry asbestos were, until the early 1970's, recycled for use as carpet underlay in some Australian homes.

There may be other asbestos-containing products made before the mid-late 1980's in the home, such as drainage and flue pipes, roofing shingles, guttering, eaves, fences, sheds, vinyl tiles and the underlay to vinyl sheet floors.

SafeWork SA's jurisdiction is strictly confined to workplace arrangements, however in the public interest the agency has been distributing since 2004 through hardware stores and other channels, a free publication entitled 'Asbestos and the Home Renovator', which directly addresses this issue.

From that booklet, the agency's advice is as follows:

“Removing asbestos is a specialised task.

“Although you do not need a licence to remove asbestos in your [own] home as a homeowner, it is strongly recommended that you contract a licensed asbestos removal contractor if you are planning asbestos removal work [because of the dangers]

“If you are undertaking maintenance or minor asbestos removal work, it is important to apply the safety control measures outlined (in the booklet) to ensure you minimise exposure to asbestos fibres.

“It is also recommended that a fully licensed asbestos contractor removes the asbestos-containing underlay to vinyl sheet floors, as the asbestos is in a friable form and this presents a greater risk of asbestos fibre exposure.

“(Specialist equipment may be required for this type of work and licensed asbestos removal contractors will have the right equipment to do the work.)”

The booklet together with other information on asbestos is available online from the SafeWork SA website: www.safework.sa.gov.au (Look under OHS in the dropdown menu and click on 'asbestos') or call the Help Centre on 1300 365 255

Hard copies are also available from the SafeWork SA Bookshop, on the ground floor of the WorkCoverSA building, 100 Waymouth Street, Adelaide.

