

12 May 2016

Dear Sir/Madam

## Property Inspections and Information

We are continuing a sample of stock condition surveys on a variety of properties. This letter will:

- Tell you what to expect from the survey
- Give you some facts about asbestos
- Give you some facts about water management & the prevention of Legionnaires Disease
- Remind you of some of your key responsibilities as a tenant

If your home is selected, the surveyor will normally call between 8:30am and 5:00pm, Monday to Friday. If they can't access your property when they visit, you'll need to arrange another inspection. These inspections have to take place, so if you do find a card telling you we were at your home, it's important that you call us to rearrange on 713465 between 8:30am and 5pm.

If you're in when we call, you should ask the surveyor for their photographic ID card before letting them into your home. If you have any doubts as to the surveyor's identity, do not let them into your property until you have checked with us on 713465.

You may already have had visits to your home for inspections of water services and/or asbestos. Some properties will require additional annual inspections to ensure that water tanks remain clean and/or asbestos components have not deteriorated.

I've previously written to tenants to explain how we manage asbestos and water services in our properties, and to offer advice as to how the risks associated with both can be managed. It's worth repeating these messages.

### Asbestos

The presence of asbestos in the Island is common. Provided it's in sound condition and left undisturbed it does not present any significant health risk. Leaving asbestos-containing materials alone is often the best way to reduce risk, therefore, the States' Health and Safety Executive recommends removing them only where necessary, or if they have been damaged or disturbed.

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**You must ask our permission before carrying out any work or alterations to your home so that a Housing Inspector can carry out an inspection.**

Our contractors know they have to comply with all Health and Safety Legislation.

The enclosed information sheet provides further information about asbestos – please keep it somewhere safe for easy reference.

#### Water quality and the prevention of Legionella

You should ensure that water systems do not stagnate in your home by **flushing all water outlets for two minutes each week if they're not used regularly, and after holidays** (this includes outside taps and other infrequently used outlets). Please ensure that you keep showers and taps clean and free from scale to prevent harmful bacteria from growing in these locations. We've introduced cleaning and regular assessments for some cold water storage systems and we recommend that tenants clean shower heads and hoses at least once every three months. If your shower head becomes clogged and you're unable to clear it, ask us for advice.

We also recommend removing and emptying garden hoses when they're not in use.

Please see attached Legionnaires' disease guidance for tenants and residents.

We have an Asbestos Management Plan and a Water Management Plan, both of which are available on our website: [www.gov.gg/HousingMaintenance](http://www.gov.gg/HousingMaintenance). If you'd like printed copies, please call us on 713465 and we'll send a copy to you.

#### Periodic electrical inspections

As a result of good practice and new directives, we are arranging for every home to have an electrical inspection every 5 years. Please cooperate with the contractors that require access to complete these inspections.

#### General advice and reminders

Your responsibilities as a tenant, as well as our responsibilities, are set out in the Tenancy Agreement and the information booklets that come with it. Please make sure that you've read these documents. If you've lost them, you can read them online at [www.gov.gg/tenancymanagement](http://www.gov.gg/tenancymanagement), or you can ask us to send you some new copies.

In our experience, the following advice is sometimes overlooked and worth repeating:

- If you use your coal fire you must have your chimney swept regularly - otherwise you're more likely to have a chimney fire.
- Important documents are kept in the meter cupboard in your home. These documents include Asbestos Surveys & Registers, and records of electrical inspections, as well as other key documents. **They must not be removed.**

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- You pay building insurance as part of your rent, but this is for the building only. You are responsible for insuring the contents of your house – your belongings – and any other parts of the property that you are responsible for looking after as part of your tenancy agreement, such as the windows. You need to arrange contents insurance yourself. You can find a list of insurance brokers in the Yellow Pages.
- If your home is damaged you may still have to pay towards the cost of fixing that damage. Housing's insurers charge us whenever we claim against our insurance; we will pass that charge on to you if we think that you were responsible for causing the damage – these costs can be substantial. Ours Insurance Excess can be as much as £5,000; however, we currently recover up to £750 from the tenant where they're liable.
- You are responsible for keeping your gardens neat, well cared for and free from rubbish. If we have to pay someone to clean up your garden we will pass the cost on to you. If you're unable to carry out the garden maintenance yourself, you will need to ask a family member or friend to help you out. If that is not possible you will need to pay someone to do it for you. We can give you details of the contractors that we use if you wish to contact them.
- You must put household rubbish in secure rubbish bags. Please don't leave bags out for collection until the evening immediately prior to collection.
- When vacating your home, you must remove all your belongings and leave the property clean and in good order.

If you have any questions about this letter, please contact the Property Management Section on 713465.

Yours faithfully

Mr D Le Flock  
Property Manager  
Housing

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## Property Management & Maintenance Update - ASBESTOS

### What is asbestos?

Asbestos is a naturally occurring clay-like material, which consists of tiny fibres. It was once considered a very useful building product because it is fireproof, cheap and easily shaped. Therefore, it was widely used until the adverse health effects of exposure to loose asbestos fibres were widely known. Asbestos was commonly used in the 1970s, in various forms.

### Why may asbestos be a problem?

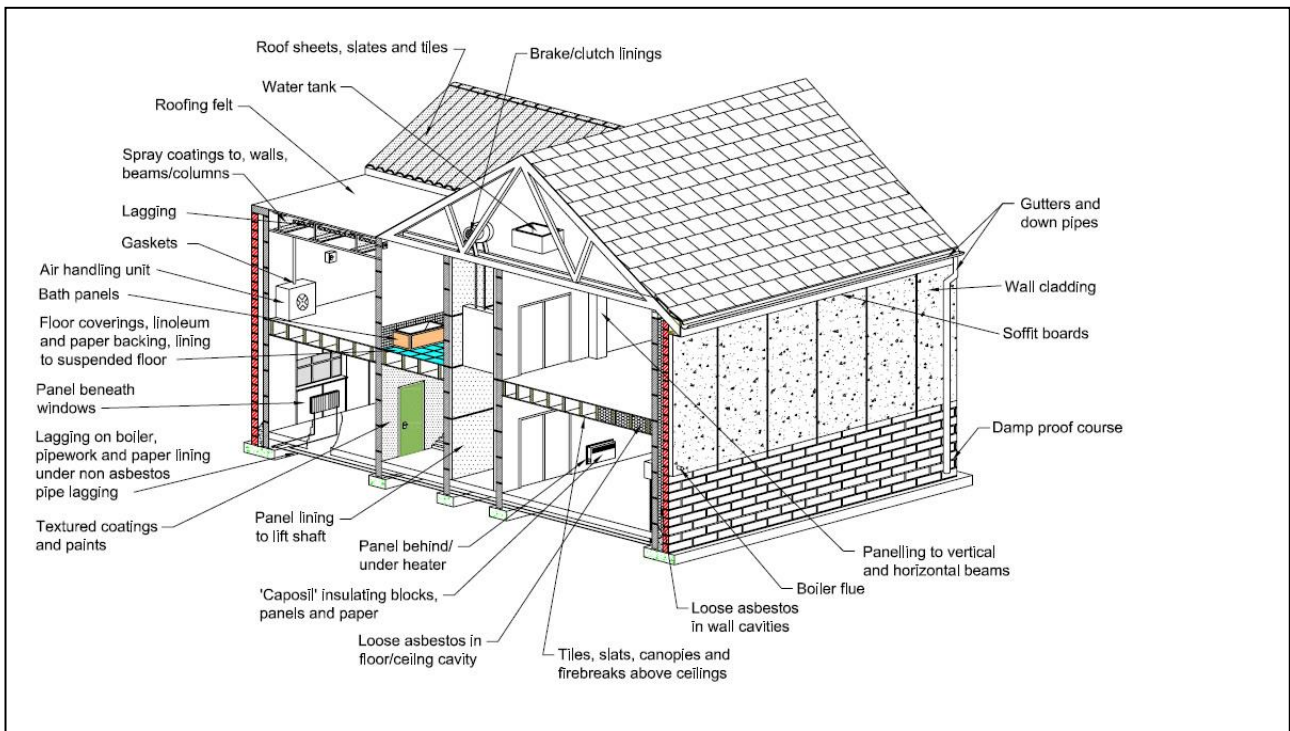
Asbestos cannot harm anybody unless they breathe in asbestos fibres. Therefore, products containing asbestos do not normally present a problem unless they become damaged or worn, and the asbestos fibres are released into the air.

### What products could contain asbestos?

Building materials containing asbestos were widely used from 1930 to the mid-1980s, particularly from the 1960s onwards. This means houses and flats built or refurbished at this time may contain asbestos. Asbestos has also been used in some heat resistant household products, such as oven gloves and ironing boards. The use of asbestos in these products decreased greatly around the mid-1980s, and since 1993 the use of asbestos in most products has been progressively banned.

It is not always easy to tell whether a product contains asbestos, because modern asbestos-free materials often look similar.

We've found asbestos in artex, vinyl floor tiles, bitumen, roof slates and other places. We've attached a summary of items we've so far identified in our properties but virtually all instances have been assessed as low or very low risk. The drawing below shows where asbestos materials can often be found. This drawing and the attached list is not complete, it's only a guide to use before your property has a specific survey.



### **How can I identify products or materials containing asbestos?**

You can't. The only way to tell for sure is to have a sample taken and sent for analysis. This is a specialist job which can only be carried out by specially licensed contractors and laboratories.

### **What are the risks?**

Virtually all asbestos so far identified in our properties have been assessed as low or very low risk. The risks increase if asbestos materials are damaged, therefore, if you observe any areas that are damaged, you must report this to the Property Management Section on Tel: 713465 or Tel: 724215 for urgent enquiries only.

### **What should I do?**

If you've been told or suspect there is asbestos in your home – don't worry. It's very unlikely that the levels of any asbestos fibres found in your home will be harmful. Asbestos products cannot harm you unless there are loose fibres, which can be breathed in over a period of time. It's usually best to leave asbestos materials in good condition where they are, because removal can lead to higher levels of fibres in the air for some time. This is why we prefer to carry out any removal required whilst a property is unoccupied.

Areas such as artex can be washed and painted but must not be sanded or disturbed. The asbestos is fully encapsulated in the artex when the textured finish is dry. No special treatment is required other than coating with normal emulsion paint.

The Tenancy Agreement states that **“Tenants must not carry out any alteration or addition to the structure of the property either internally or externally or remove or modify any fixture, fittings or property of Housing without first obtaining the consent of Housing in writing.”** If you would like to carry out alterations or disturb parts of the building, you must first obtain permission from us; if we approve the proposed works, it will arrange for any areas that could contain asbestos to be surveyed/ tested before the areas are disturbed. If areas that contain asbestos need to be disturbed, we will arrange for appropriate contractors to carry out the work using approved methods or we'll arrange for its removal to be carried out by an appropriate contractor in a controlled manner.

If you think you have damaged asbestos materials in your home you must tell us straight away.

### **What are we doing?**

Please see our Asbestos Management Plan on our website: [www.gov.gg/HousingMaintenance](http://www.gov.gg/HousingMaintenance)

We've:

- maintained records of previous surveys, analysis and any subsequent removal;
- recorded a central list of all known asbestos left in situ;
- circulated our Asbestos Management Plan to all interested parties;
- prepared risk assessments for known asbestos products;
- initially focused on communal areas and void properties prior to being relet; and
- organised further training and documentation of our processes/ procedures for our staff.

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We're:

- carrying out on-going inspections and, where necessary surveys, to establish whether areas that are likely to be disturbed could contain asbestos prior to work being carried out. The more extensive surveys are being carried out on void properties prior to extensive work.
- recording the location, condition and risk assessment of confirmed asbestos left in situ;
- planning to inspect every known instance of asbestos on an annual basis;
- updating our Housing Management System to incorporate all known asbestos containing materials in one system. This will enable us to provide contractors and tenants with warnings automatically, of any known asbestos in the property, on the job orders;
- writing to all the contractors that we use to remind them of their responsibilities regarding asbestos awareness and providing them with access to our Asbestos Management Plan;
- producing property specific asbestos registers to install in the meter cupboard of domestic properties and in the communal areas of flats; and
- use previous results to prioritise future surveys and registers.

#### **Where can I find out more?**

Useful links:

[www.gov.gg/HousingMaintenance](http://www.gov.gg/HousingMaintenance)

[www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk)

If you have any queries or concerns, please contact the Property Management Section on Tel: 713465 or for urgent matters Tel: 724215.

**We've found asbestos in some of the following products so far**

ARTEX

FLOOR TILE BITUMEN

ENCAPSULATED TILE BITUMEN (SCREED)

PAPER BACKED LINOLEUM

BLACK VINYL FLOOR TILE

VINYL FLOOR TILE

WATER TANK

FIRE ROPE SEAL

FIRE/GAS/BOILER FLUE

REDUNTANT FLUE

WATER HEATER FLUE

FLUE

BOXINGS

BATH PANEL

SINK DRAINER BITUMEN PAD

ASBESTOS INSULATION BOARD (cement type board/sheet panels used for boxing etc.)

BOXING BATHROOM

AIRING CUPBOARD DOOR LINING/PANEL

HEATER BASE PLATE PANEL

CEMENT SHEET/PANEL DEBRIS (NOT DUST)

EXTERNAL WC CISTERN

ROOF FELT

ROOF SLATES

PORCH SLATE

ROOF SOFFIT

PORCH SOFFIT

DOWNPIPES

UNDERCLOAK (cement like sheet/board underneath the end of a roof covering

DOWNPIPES (RWG)

SHED DAMP PROOF COURSE (Also some brick houses DPC)

SHED ROOF BITUMEN

CORRUGATED CEMENT ROOF SHEETING

**NB. This is not an exhaustive list and virtually all examples that have been confirmed have been identified as low or very low risk.**



## Guidance on Water Management

Domestic hot and cold water systems can provide an environment where Legionella bacteria can grow. This can cause Legionnaires' disease, which is a potentially fatal form of pneumonia caused by inhalation of small droplets of contaminated water containing Legionella bacteria. This sheet gives tips for residents of rented domestic accommodation such as houses, bungalows and flats.

### Most importantly, make sure that:

- Hot water in the system remains hot
- Cold water is kept cold
- The water is kept circulated

### In particular, it is important that you –

- **Do not** interfere with the settings on your boiler or hot water system. The hot water should be set so that the water is heated up to 60°C.
- **Tell us if:**
  - The cold water is still running warm after you have initially run off any water which may have accumulated in the pipes. It should not be above 20°C.
  - There are any problems, debris or discolouration in the water.
  - The boiler or hot water tank are not working properly, particularly if the water is not coming out of the taps at a sufficiently high temperature. It should come out at a temperature of 50°C after it has run for a minute at the latest.

### Where showers are fitted –

- If they are used only occasionally then flush them through by running them for at least two minutes every week. Keep out of the way whilst this is being done as far as possible.
- Clean the shower head periodically, descale and disinfect it. This should be done at least every six months.

Where a property is left vacant for any time, e.g. summer holidays, make sure that when it is occupied again at the outset both hot and cold water systems are flushed through by running all outlets for at least 2 minutes.

If you require any further information, please contact our Maintenance Section on Tel 713465.