

Bumps in the Night!!!!

Paranormal "U"

Asbestos

Hidden Dangers Series

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The architecture of an older building is fascinating to many who are interested in the paranormal and investigate abandoned buildings. The craftsmanship that it took to build structures in the days before modern technology is something that should be respected. However, there were things done in the past that later information showed to be harmful, and this includes in the construction of homes and buildings.

The term *asbestos* covers a set of six silicate materials that occur naturally and crystallize into fibers. They fall into two categories, serpentine and amphibole. Serpentine fibers are curly and have been popular for industrial use. Amphibole fibers are like straight needles and are the ones that have been linked to many potential health risks. That is not to say that serpentine fibers are harmless, as they have also been linked to cancer and other serious illness.

In earlier years of construction, asbestos was found to be extremely durable in the building of homes and other structures. The word itself is derived from the Greek meaning "inextinguishable", and mixing the fibers with cement made buildings that indeed stood the test of time and were resistant to fire and chemical damage. This was especially popular in the latter part of the 19th century, largely because of disasters like the Great Chicago Fire of 1871. Many of the older homes that are such a draw to curiosity seekers contain asbestos.

Abandoned buildings are subject to break-ins by trespassers, destruction by animals, and the eventual toll of the elements and lack of care. This means extensive renovation if the building is to be saved, which brings about the danger of asbestos. The very fibers that were thought to make a structure so durable have the potential to cause serious damage to humans breathing them when disturbed.

It was in the first part of the 20th century that the concerns about asbestos and the health risks began in earnest. The first recorded death from asbestosis was a 33 year old English woman in 1924. She had been working around the asbestos materials since she was thirteen years of age. This prompted England to do a study of the health risks and in 1931, laws were passed to make sure asbestos related workplaces had proper ventilation and excused absences for any illness incurred. It would be another ten years before the United States would do the same.

Even with the regulations placed, until 1972 many buildings were insulated with asbestos. This begs the question--how safe are the homes we live in if they were built before this date? What is important to note is that friable asbestos (airborne from structures that are falling apart) is what is the most dangerous. Non-friable or intact asbestos does not cause the damage that breathing in airborne fibers does. It is often found in insulation around pipes as well as within the walls of a building, a potential danger if renovation is attempted. The damage from friable asbestos is severe, especially with long-term exposure. As with many things that are harmful to us, the more a person is exposed over longer periods, the greater the risk.

Three diseases in particular have been associated with the long term exposure to asbestos. One of these is asbestosis, which is when the airborne particles are inhaled and embed themselves in the lung tissue. The body creates an acid in an attempt to reject the foreign matter. The asbestos resists erosion, however scar tissue builds up. Over time, this scar tissue can cause the lungs to stop working properly. This type of manifestation takes place anywhere from 25-40 years after exposure.

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Asbestos – Do you know what you are breathing?

Mesothelioma is a cancer that has been shown to be directly related to asbestos exposure. People who work around asbestos-laden materials are at the highest risk for this type of cancer. It attacks the thin lining of the lungs and can spread to the abdomen as well. The time it can take from first exposure to manifestation of the disease is up to 30 years, although it can remain a risk for the rest of a person's life.

Lung cancer is also attributed to asbestos exposure, although doctors believe that the risk is especially increased with smokers. Again, the risk remains after exposure for as much as 35 years. Because of these risks, asbestos is classified as a known human carcinogen by three different organizations--the National Toxicology Program, the International Agency for the Research on Cancer, and the Environmental Protection Agency.

Respect for older, abandoned homes, some of which have become local spots for reported paranormal activity, incite many people to assist in renovations. Restoring a home to its former glory is no easy task, and when asbestos is involved, the best choice is to let professionals who are trained to protect themselves test the area and remove the asbestos properly. It is also another reason never to trespass and risk exposure in a home that may be falling apart and sending airborne asbestos particles everywhere.

At TnT Paranormal Investigations, we truly care about the safety of anyone wanting to investigate a location that is at potential risk for friable asbestos. Anything that we learn about this, we want to share with our readers.

For further education and facts about asbestos and the risks, please check the following links.

<http://www.scholarlyarticles.org/lung-mesothelioma-asbestos/10044.html>

<http://www.epa.gov/asbestos/pubs/ashome.html>

<http://www.chiff.com/a/asbestos-disease.htm>

<http://www.cancer.org/Cancer/CancerCauses/OtherCarcinogens/IntheWorkplace/asbestos>