

The BC Inspector



Asbestos in the home

We all know our home is a dangerous place, right? What with Radon, Mould, Formaldehyde, Lead and now Asbestos it is a wonder how we survive? Well, the reason we do is largely a result of common sense. We're taught as children not to dive into dark water without knowing what is below the surface. Well it is the same in our home. We need to learn and understand what the risks are and how to handle them. We like to use the analogy of having gasoline in the home. Most of us have it for our lawnmower. Do you use fire around it or breathe it? No, it is explosive and harmful to our lungs but we still handle it safely every time we fill the lawnmower. The same caution must be followed when working with asbestos. The key to common sense however is that it is generally taught first.

We would like to discuss the specific issue of having Asbestos in a home, and the first place to start is to learn more about it. Asbestos is a wonderful product with terrific attributes. It is mined from rock. It is virtually indestructible and a great overall material. Unfortunately, these terrific attributes are also the cause for concern when handling it. If the fibers become airborne, they can lodge in your lungs and will never break down. Your lungs defense it to coat the fibers and to try to absorb them. The result is a build up of coatings over the lodged fibers that eventually can result in the lungs not functioning.

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Asbestos – How to protect yourself

Paper dust masks do not stop these fibres from entering your lungs. Specially constructed HEPA (**high efficiency particulate arrester**) filters are required. These filters are capable of, by definition, removing at least 99.97% of airborne particles 0.3 micrometers (μm) in diameter. The key here is before the Home Owner starts any renovation or demolition you will need to test for materials that could contain asbestos. As a Home or Building Inspector, this is where you come into the programme. You should be aware of the likely areas that Asbestos products can be found in a typical residence. Generally, any residence that was built after the late 80's will not contain Asbestos products.

Some of the common places asbestos can be found in the home:

- Roofing shingles may contain asbestos. A flat roof may have asbestos in the roofing felts as well as the mastic used around chimney, plumbing or flashing.
- Vermiculite attic insulation. It was mined in Libby Montana and looks like kitty litter.
- Drywall may have been mudded with asbestos taping compound. It is not in the drywall so care needs to be taken when sampling to get the taping compound from the drywall joints or corner bead.
- Older light fixtures can have asbestos paper behind the light bulb for its fire retardant capability.
- Asbestos is often found in floor tiles. The mastic holding the flooring may also contain it. Older linoleum will often contain asbestos. (How many layers do you have? Has new flooring just been laid over top of old?)
- Heating ducts may contain asbestos duct tape that was used to seal the joints and furnace transitions to the heating pipes. Again, it was used here for its heat resistant qualities. Older, oil fired furnaces may have asbestos insulation wrap as well as air-cell asbestos insulation on the pipes (generally homes 1950 and older).

The question we are often asked is whether a homeowner can take the samples themselves. **Again, common sense is your guide.** As you may be disturbing possible asbestos, you should wear a HEPA mask and gloves when taking a sample, you should also have a vacuum that is equipped with a recently tested HEPA filter to be sure you are not blowing possible asbestos throughout your home. Actes recommends you use the services of a trained professional consultant. This way you will have a complete report based on your needs and will allow a contractor such as Actes Environmental to be aware of the issues you may face. When choosing a contractor, you will need to be sure they, are fully trained in the safe handling of asbestos, and carry pollution liability insurance. This is very important in case of an accidental release of Asbestos fibres. Every job will need a notice of project to be filed with WorkSafe BC. With the notice of project, you will want a full set of detailed work procedures that will outline exactly how your project will be completed safely. Now that you have an outline of where you may find asbestos and how it should be handled, you are on your way to having “common sense” and being able to provide a valuable added service to your clients as a part of your Home Inspection.

Submitted by Michael Fleming of [ACTES Environmental Ltd](#)

Grow-Op Resources and Information

Municipal Policies:

[Kelowna](#), [North Vancouver \(District\)](#) [Richmond](#), [Surrey](#), [Vancouver](#)

If you know of other publications, please let us know so that we can add them to the list.

Identifying on Report:

At a recent CAHPI BC meeting, the membership discussed the issue of identifying a grow-op on the inspector's report. The executive recommended the following wording:

Possible Grow-Op: The following items were observed during the inspection:

List items

It is impossible for 'Insert your company name' to verify why, how, or when these items came into existence, but they have been known to be associated with marijuana grow operations.

You should seek further advice from your Realtor, the vendors, municipal and/or police records, and if you decide necessary, contractors and/or engineers to confirm if these items are associated with former marijuana grow operations on the premises.

Other Useful Links:

[CMHC Discussion Paper re Indoor Air Quality in relation to Grow Ops](#)

[BC Hydro talks about electricity theft](#)

[UBC Data on Grow-Ops and Penalties](#)

[White Rock advise on how to spot a Grow-Op](#)

Ask an inspector – Follow-Up (April)

We have had very little follow up to the request made in April for a calendar of hazardous or poorly constructed products by age of building.

“Would the more experienced inspectors be willing to provide a list of defects that are present in certain aged homes? Please ask them to provide some source for their information”

If you have this type of information lying around, please forward it to editor@senwi.ca and we will consolidate it and publish when done.

Calling all expert witnesses: Have you been an expert witness against or in support of another home or property inspectors? In most cases, the judge's decisions are publicly posted and provide the rationale for making a decision one way or the other. These cases make excellent learning opportunities for a house or property inspector and your editor asks for copies of any decisions you come across to allow future posting in this newsletter.

ASK AN INSPECTOR - Inspector Question of the month

Your editor submits this month's question.

I recently came across a home with a GFCI protected receptacle installed on a circuit that already had GFCI protection at the breaker panel. I was unsure if this would cause nuisance tripping or interfere with the protection and posted the question to the BC Safety Authority.

ULRICH JANISCH – The Senior Electrical Safety Officer kindly responded with:

Under most circumstances, a single GFCI device will be installed to protect a circuit (or part of a circuit). There are a number of different types of GFCI devices readily available on the market, but in most cases, the GFCI device will be either a GFCI circuit breaker or a GFCI receptacle. On occasion, a second (or third) GFCI device will be installed in a circuit. This is rarely done by design and usually happens if the installer is unaware that the circuit is already protected by a GFCI device. Although this is kind of like wearing a belt and suspenders, there is no evidence which would suggest that doubling up on GFCI protection presents a risk to safety or that the level of protection is reduced. In fact, it is not uncommon to find multiple GFCI devices installed in series which protect various parts of an electrical system in large commercial buildings. The problem largely becomes one of co-ordination. Whenever two protective devices are installed in series with each other, the installer should try to co-ordinate the protection in such a way that the device, which is closest (upstream) to the fault, will be the device, which opens the circuit. Co-ordination of such systems is usually designed by an engineer.

For residential purposes: most GFCI devices will have similar tripping characteristics. If two such devices are installed in series, it is impossible to predict which device will trip under a particular set of circumstances. This can become a nuisance because the device closest to the fault (usually the receptacle being used at the time) may not be the device, which trips. However, although it can be a nuisance, it is not a risk to safety.

The same holds true for AFCI's in series, or AFCI and GFCI in series

Please submit all questions and responses to editor@senwi.ca

** Submissions may be edited for content or grammar



|Industry News|

[CAHPI National announces end of support for National Certification Program](#)

[National Certification Authority members launch the National Home Inspector Certification Council](#)

[NHICC asks CAHPI to release the NCA Program](#)

[CAHPI BC Apoints Helene Barton as their Executive Director](#)

[Federal Competition Bureau asks for changes to the MLS system and Realtor's fees](#)

[Maytag to recal 1.7M dishwashers](#)

[Chinease Drywall – It is all about the bugs](#)

[Get the latest stats on how the housing market is doing in the GVRD](#)

[SENWI sales stats for five predominant GVRD cities](#)

[CSA Product Recall & Alerts](#)

[BC Safety Authority warns against ceiling heating panels](#)

[Health & Safety Information on household products](#)

Picture(s) of the Month



CONSIDER THE PANIC IF YOU HEAR A BRANCH CRACK... Are those stairs separated from the rock by a Type S membrane?

Picture submitted by BCIPI Inspector: John Kostelnik

This building has a built-in Flower Box watering system.

Picture submitted by BCIPI Inspector: Sean Wiens



This photo clearly shows the difference a dielectric coupling makes!

Picture submitted by: Unknown

CPD Corner (Continuing Professional Development)

Please visit our **New** [CPD Calendar](#) for specific seminars and events in your area. The Agenda view includes a location and provides for easy reference.

Moisture Mysteries: We will highlight a series of articles written by Roger Hankey for the ASHI Reporter. [June 2009](#)

Computer Tip:

Have you ever typed a sentence into your computer only to look up to see that your caps lock was left on. The following tip allows you to toggle any selected text between ALL CAPS, all lower, And proper case.

For Microsoft Outlook or Word (sorry, it does not work in Outlook Express):

Step 1: Use your mouse to highlight all the text you accidentally wrote in uppercase.

Step 2: Hold down the Shift key and tap F3

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Notes:

- **The CPD calendar is currently set to 'public' and can be viewed by anyone. By the October newsletter, this will be converted to only being accessible to those with a free subscription to The BC Inspector.** You will also need a Google account set up on the email address you receive this newsletter by. For those that have received this newsletter directly from editor@senwi.ca (subscribers), your email address will be set up with viewing access to this calendar.

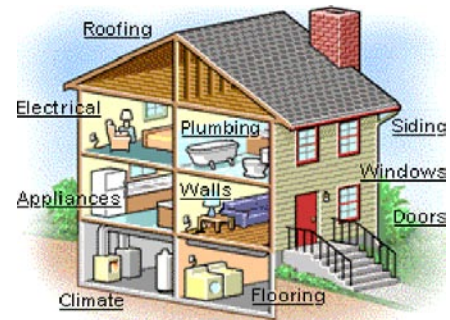
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Inspector Fun (sometimes!)

[Home Inspection Nightmares VI](#)

Photo's submitted by inspectors throughout the USA. Do you have something you think could beat these photos? Submit them today to editor@senwi.ca.

[Think you are a good inspector? Prove It #4!](#)

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