

Make Health a Priority When Remodeling

FAMILY FEATURES

When you tackle a remodeling project, there are many unknowns, including what types of materials you might uncover. Hazardous materials must be addressed, and possibly removed, if exposed during a remodeling project. There are also some materials that should be removed to create a healthier home environment.

Whether materials “must be” or “should be” removed depends on several factors. It is always wise to consult with trained professionals, such as members of the National Association of the Remodeling Industry, when you encounter hazardous materials.

The complete removal of all hazardous materials is the preferred approach, but budget is often a hindrance. Thoroughly exploring your options may reveal a lower level of acceptable and more affordable mitigation.

Demolition

Most common residential hazardous materials are not hazardous if they remain in a dormant or undisturbed location. Typically, they become hazardous during

the demolition phase when they are ground, cut, bumped, scraped or disturbed in some way, causing the materials to become airborne and inhaled.

Examples of common hazardous materials include:

- **Lead-based paint**, which can be found on be anything that is painted or varnished such as windows, millwork, cabinets, siding, walls and other surfaces.
- **Lead water lines**, which are primarily hazardous after water sits in the lines for some time prior to consumption, although contamination still occurs during normal flow rates.
- **Asbestos**, which was once commonly used in a wide range of materials such as pipe or duct insulation; flooring tiles or sheet goods; ceiling tiles and plaster; wall and attic insulation; and plaster used as a binder.
- **Silica**, which is exceptionally dangerous during saw cutting processes where dust is created.
- **Mold**, which is not hazardous until the spores are disturbed, become airborne and are inhaled or ingested. Any visible or detectable mold should be removed, and the surfaces cleaned or removed.

High concentrations of mold should be addressed by trained professionals, as it can be hazardous if not handled properly.

- **Dust**, which can be hazardous to some individuals who are sensitive or have breathing-related issues. Dust barriers and negative air enclosures can help minimize, but not eliminate, dust contamination to the rest of the home. Commercial dust “scrubber” filtering systems can significantly reduce dust contamination.

Installation

Once the existing hazardous materials are appropriately addressed, new materials will be placed in your home to replace or enhance the project. Due to strong demand by homeowners, you’re likely to find many options for healthy products.

For example, prefinished materials (that can be painted, stained or varnished off-site) aid in the reduction of on-site fumes and vapors.

Other products to look for when you’re remodeling with health in mind include:

- Low volatile organic compounds, which limit the amount of off-gassing of the materials used in the manufacturing process. Typically, these are paints, stains, varnishes, carpeting and vinyl products.
- Renewable products, which can be replenished quickly.
- Heat recovery ventilation systems that exchange the thermal qualities of the interior air with fresh air brought into the home.
- Air purification systems, which may involve ozone, pleated filters, high-micron filters, electrostatic filters or UV light systems, among others.
- Dehumidification systems designed to keep the relative humidity levels in a safe range to prevent mold growth.
- Exhaust fans in baths, kitchens, lower levels and workshops, installed to discharge smells, smoke, fumes and humidity.
- Radon systems designed to exhaust radon gases to the exterior.

Find more advice to navigate a health-conscious home remodel at remodelingdoneright.com.



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