

HEALTH & SAFETY ADVISORY

Identifying asbestos in residential, institutional, and industrial facilities

Many structures built between 1930 and 1975 will contain products with high levels of asbestos. These can include homes, institutional buildings like schools and hospitals, and industrial facilities. This advisory is for industrial, commercial, and institutional (ICI), residential, and home renovation establishments, and will provide helpful safety information.

What is it?

Asbestos is a group of six naturally occurring minerals made up of fibres that are resistant to heat and corrosion. It was used in many consumer products because of its insulating properties before the dangers of exposure to asbestos were known.

Improper handling of products containing asbestos can release harmful amounts of asbestos fibres into the air. Inhaling microscopic asbestos fibres can cause serious illnesses, including lung cancer, asbestosis, and mesothelioma. The time between exposure and the development of an asbestos-related disease can range from 15 to 55 years.

Two classes of asbestos products were widely used in the past. The first includes materials that are easily crumbled or loose in composition. These are referred to as “friable.”

The second type includes materials that are more durable because they are held together by a binder such as cement, vinyl, or asphalt. These products are termed “non-friable.”

Where is it?

Asbestos can be found in many areas of both industrial and residential buildings. For example, it can be found in light fixtures, insulation around pipes, exterior siding (cladding), floor and ceiling

tiles, drywall (joint compound), and caulking materials.

Figures 1 and 2 identify common areas where asbestos can be found in both residential and industrial settings.

How to determine the presence of asbestos in a home

For homeowners, contractors are highly recommended to be hired to take samples and test for asbestos. If it is present, they can either remove it themselves using proper procedures, or, in many cases they hire a subcontractor who specializes in asbestos removal. Homeowners should ensure hired contractors are reputable and qualified to carry out these types of assessments. Simply search for environmental abatement contractors or asbestos removal contractors in the area. Both can help with identifying and removing it properly.

Homeowners are required to inform contractors about the presence of asbestos in their homes so that they can protect workers. Remember, asbestos should be removed before any work begins.

Available resources

IHSA offers a number of resources covering the topic of asbestos, including the following training courses:

- [Asbestos Abatement Supervisor](#)
- [Asbestos Abatement Worker](#)
- [Asbestos Work in Construction Hazard Awareness](#)

The [Asbestos Hazards](#) resource page on IHSA.ca provides access to a variety of articles and guidelines on asbestos, including:

- [Chart for Asbestos Operations](#)
- [Asbestos Controls for Construction, Renovation, and Demolition \(DS037\)](#)
- [Asbestos](#) (Construction Health and Safety Manual, Chapter 34)

IHSA's [Safety Talks](#) page includes a variety of talks on asbestos, including:

- [Asbestos Type 1](#)
- [Asbestos Type 2](#)
- [Asbestos Type 3](#)
- [Asbestos: Cleaning tools and PPE](#)

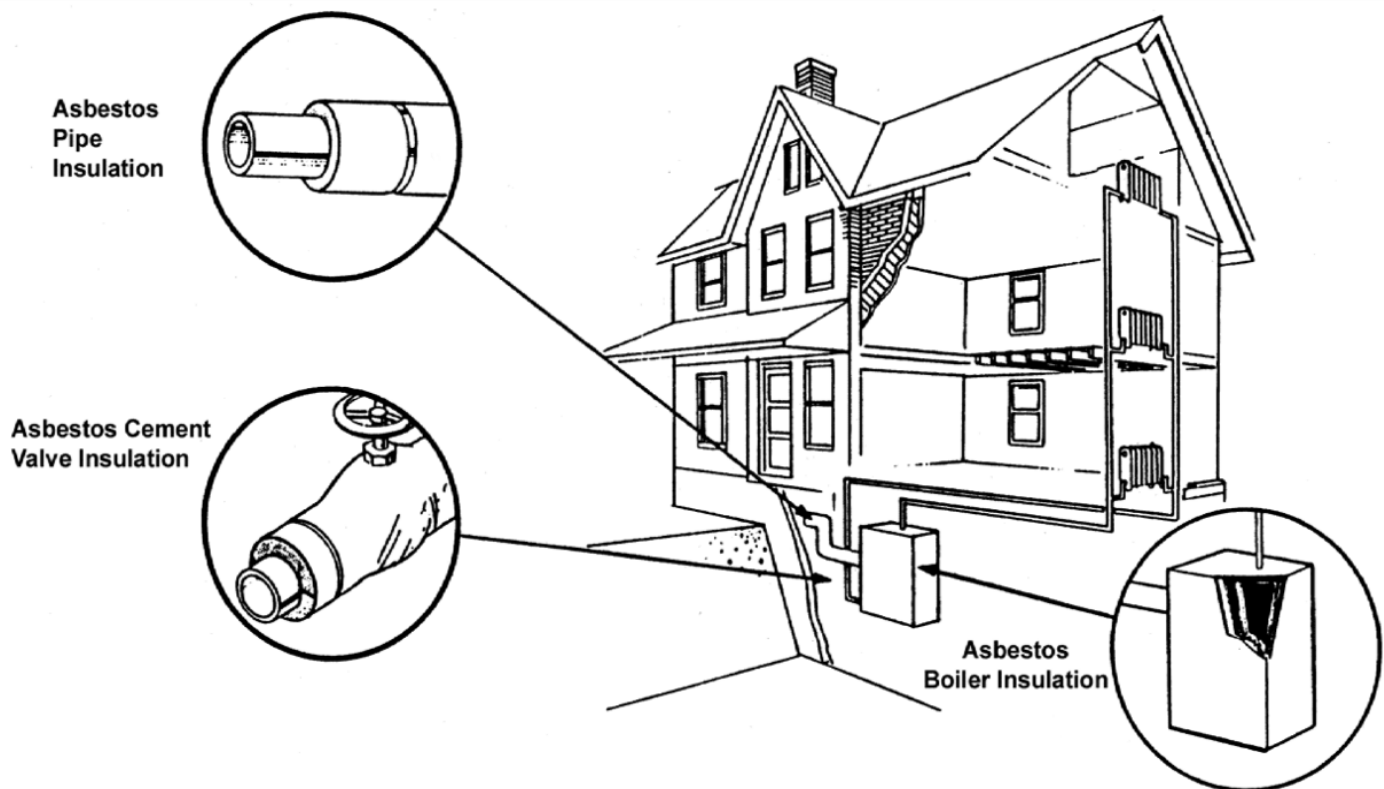


Figure 1a: Common areas within a residential setting where asbestos can be found.

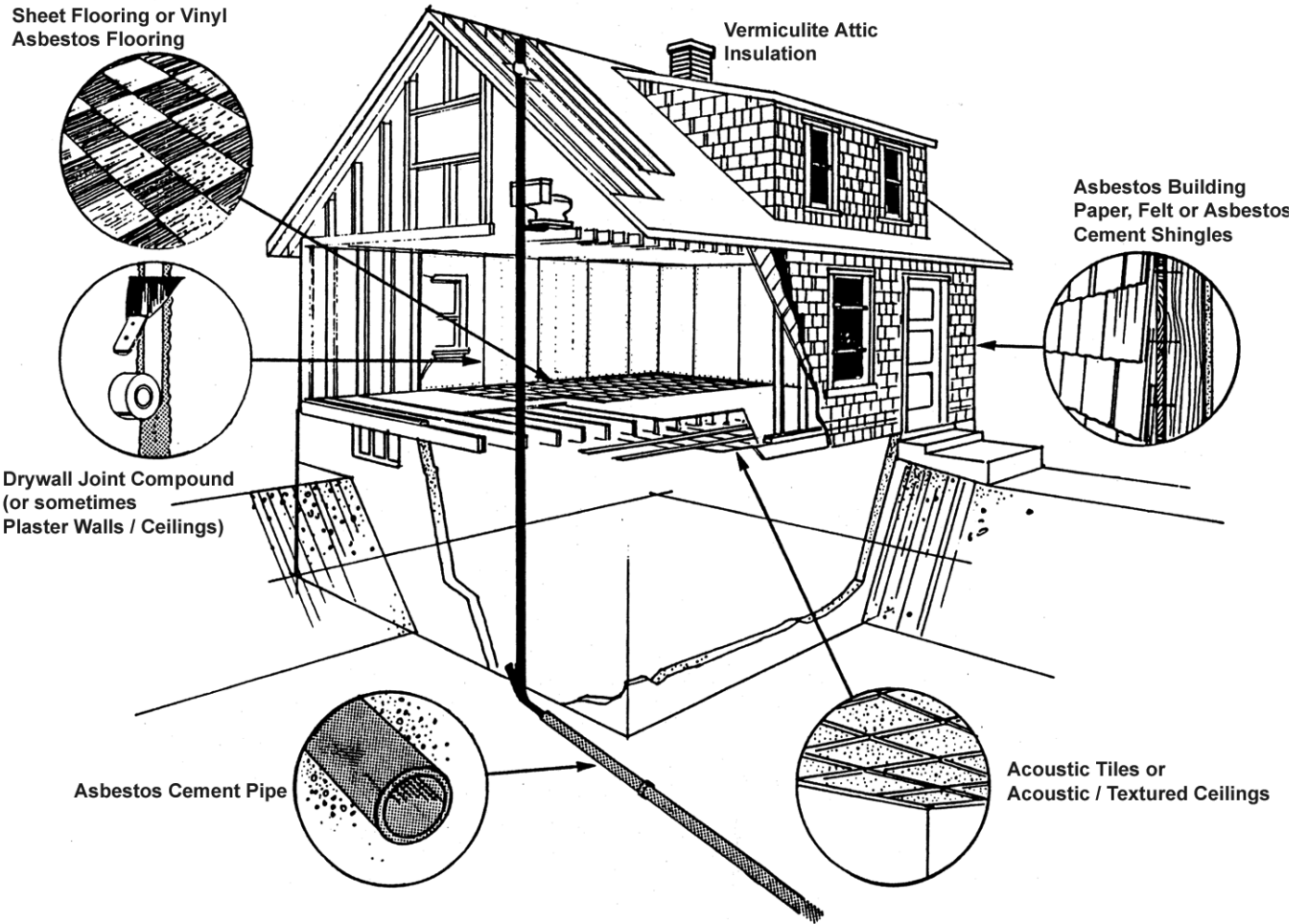


Figure 1b: Common areas within a residential setting where asbestos can be found.

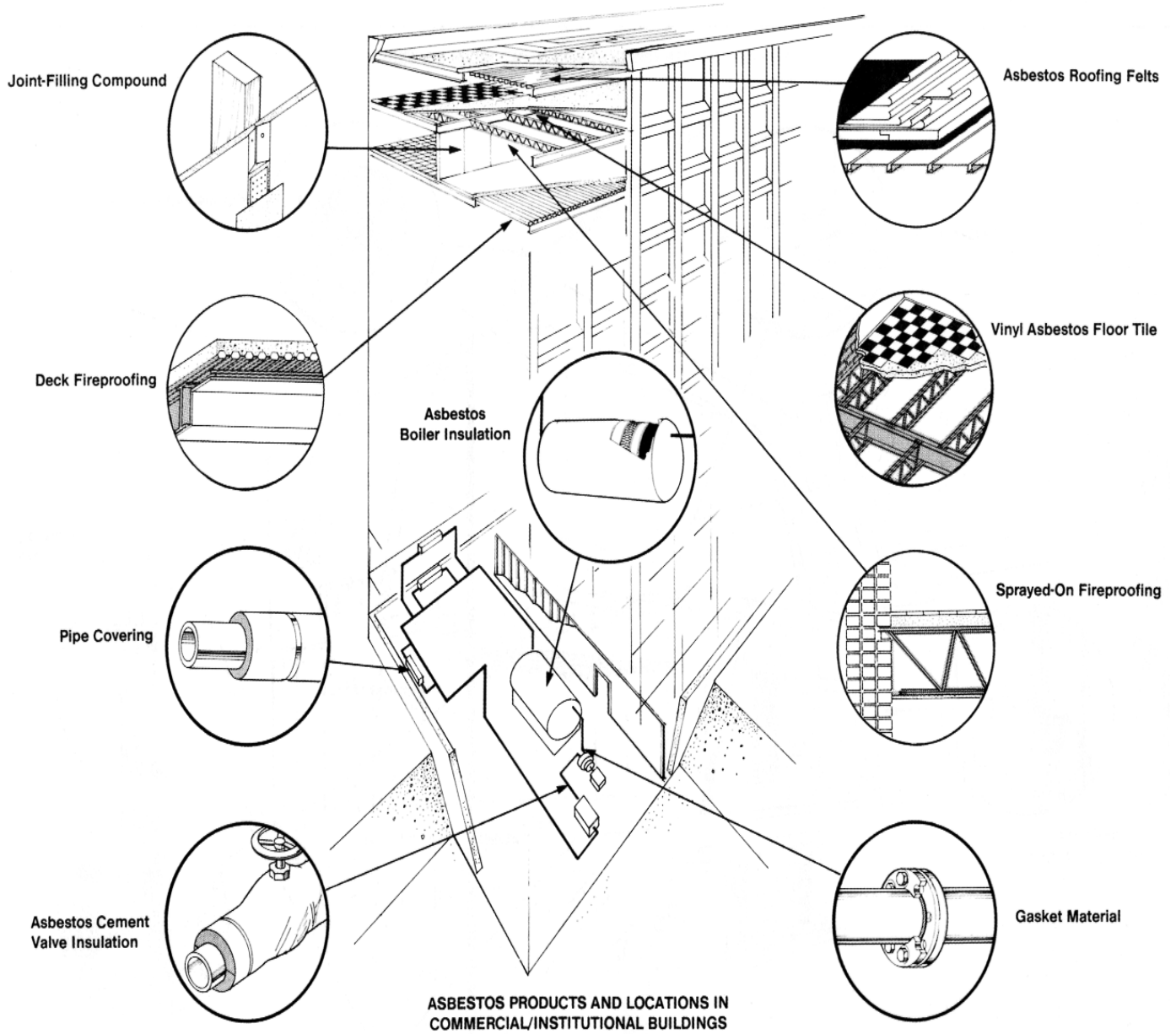


Figure 2a: Common areas within an industrial setting where asbestos can be found.

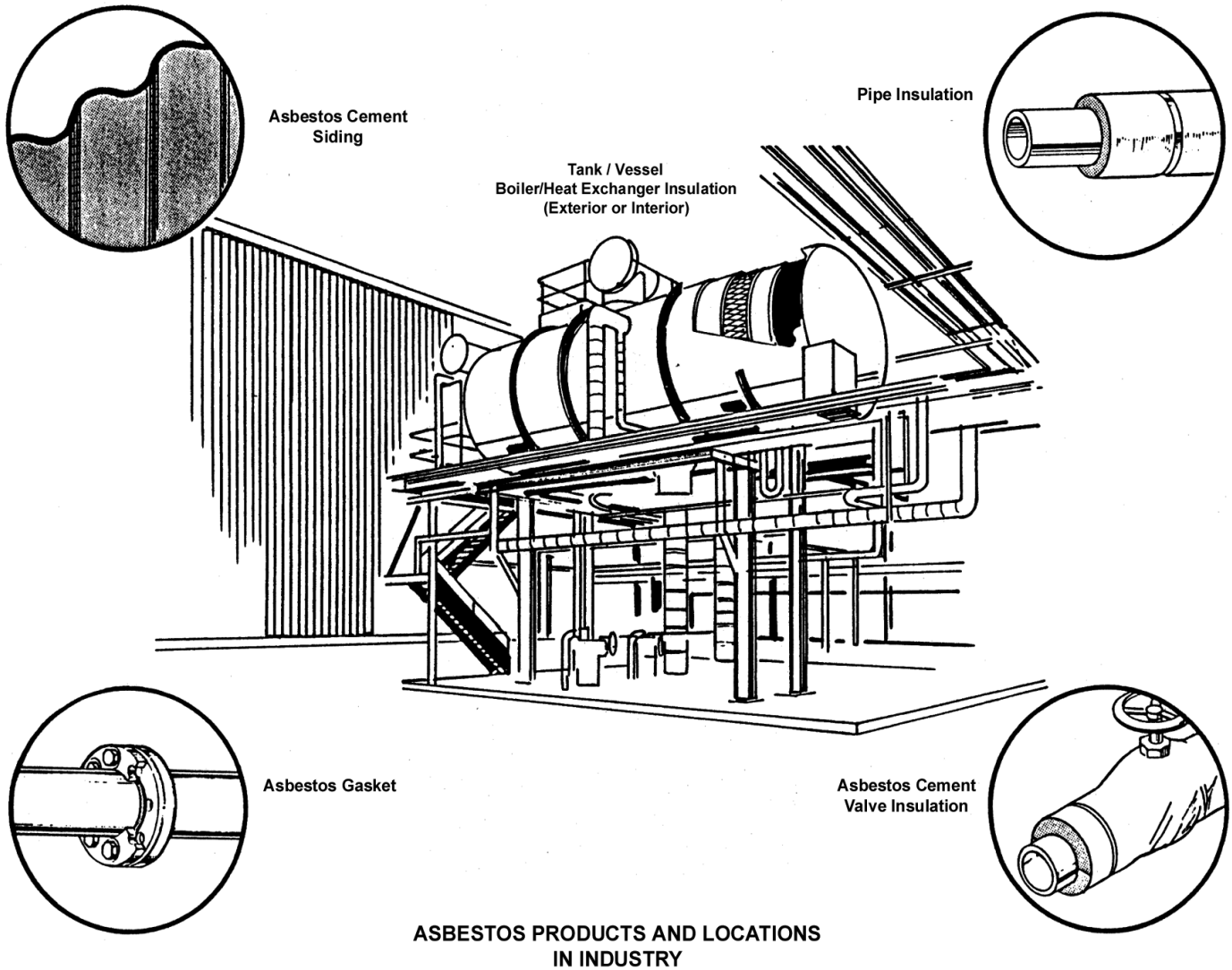


Figure 2b: Common areas within an industrial setting where asbestos can be found.

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