

This sheet constitutes a vital part of Archicentre's recommendations to you. Failure to observe the provisions of the warning sheet could jeopardise the safety of the occupants and or lead to premature deterioration of the home.

A. MAINTENANCE OF THE PROPERTY

Painting maintenance - HEALTH WARNING

Care should be taken with old painted surfaces, particularly those painted pre 1970, as they may have a high lead content. Lead is dangerous especially to children from conception to 4 years of age as it can interfere with their neurological development. Old flakey lead paint surfaces are dangerous since children may lick or swallow the flakes which have a sweet taste. Lead gets into the body through ingestion and inhalation (not through the skin).

If the old paint surface is not flaking or crumbling, painting over it is recommended to encapsulate the old paint. Lightly wet-sandpaper the surface first, carefully disposing of contaminated water. If removing the paint, don't use methods that generate dust (ie: don't dry sand or abrasive blast) and avoid burning-off the surfaces if unsure of the temperature of the heat gun (temperatures over 400° will vaporise the lead and are highly dangerous).

Chemical stripping, wet scraping or wet sanding are best. Take care in cleaning up the residue. For more information contact your State's EPA. They have a booklet entitled "Lead Alert" prepared in conjunction with the Paint Manufacturers Association. Refer also to the Australian Standard AS 4361 part 2.

Asbestos - HEALTH WARNING

Most houses built before 1983 will contain asbestos in some form. In most cases the presence of asbestos products in houses is no cause for alarm and it should be left in place.

In the past asbestos was extensively used in many products, one of the most common being "a/c sheeting" or asbestos cement. These sheets were most often used for cladding (sometimes known as "fibro") and roofing. The asbestos in these products is usually firmly embedded in the cement. Surfaces which are weathering and could release asbestos strands from the surface can be covered with paint, or better, an acrylic waterproof membrane resembling thick paint.

Removal and disposal of asbestos cement sheet should only be undertaken by a licensed asbestos removal company. Asbestos removal can add substantially to the cost of renovation or maintenance. Specialist removalists will take precautions like:

- wearing protective masks and clothing
- using hand tools and not power tools for cutting
- not abrading or breaking up the product whenever possible
- thoroughly wetting the product prior to working with it
- working outdoors rather than indoors, and
- wetting any residue prior to sweeping

Preventing brick cracking and subsidence

Extended periods of dry weather and inadequate garden watering may cause footing subsidence and cracking in brickwork particularly if large trees are planted close to the house. Ask for Archicentre's Technical Information Sheet "Cracking in Brickwork and Block Masonry".

Termite and borer attack

Termites can strike anywhere in Australia, though not significantly in Tasmania. Inadequate sub-floor ventilation, dampness and debris beneath the floor are conducive to termite attack which can cause significant damage within a period of weeks. Such conditions also encourage borer infestation and timber rot. Ask for Archicentre's Technical Information Sheet "Termites and Borers".

Hidden rising damp

Rising damp may be evident in winter but not detectable in summer. Even minor signs of damp may indicate a far more serious underlying problem and you are advised to consult a damp control company when in doubt. Rising damp can cause increased room humidity encouraging vermin infestation such as cockroaches, silverfish and dust mites which are serious asthma allergens. Ask for Archicentre's Technical Information Sheet "Treatment of Dampness in the Home".

Decks and Balconies

The safety of elevated timber or concrete decks and balconies should be a primary concern of any home-owner.

All exterior timbers are susceptible to insect attack and decay, with only pressure treated pine resistant to deterioration for any length of time. Wet rot is a particular danger - a properly applied stain or paint finish will inhibit water entry through the faces of timber members' but gaps, joints and unprotected end-grain provide a ready means for moisture to penetrate.

A typical concrete cantilevered balcony has its main reinforcement at the top, and with normal deflection a crack can develop in the concrete just outside the wall of the building. Such a crack allows salt air to penetrate the slab, resulting in corrosion that reduces the steel cross-section over time, and consequently the capacity of the balcony to carry its design load.

All outdoor decks and balconies should be regularly checked for visible signs of deterioration - if in doubt, seek the advice of a qualified Structural Engineer or Building Surveyor.

B. BUILDING REGULATIONS

Building code changes - SAFETY WARNING

The Building Code of Australia is being regularly modified making it likely that many houses will not comply with current safety provisions. This does not mean you are compelled by law to bring the house up to new standards unless you are undertaking renovation work, however you should consider upgrading from the safety and litigation point of view.

Health & Safety Warnings

Technical Information Sheet

Recent provisions are, for example:

- Glass thicknesses need to be generally greater than before, or to be laminated safety glass, if within 500mm of the ground. (There are some differences between States regarding details).
- Handrails on balconies, porches, pathways etc which have a metre or more drop must now be 1 metre in height themselves, be non-climbable and with 125mm maximum openings between uprights or similar.
- Party walls must now be built above ceiling height up to the underside of the roof lining, in all cases where the wall has to be "fire-rated" (eg: walls between houses).
- The installation of all "domestic solid fuel burning appliances" now need a building permit for fire safety reasons.

Smoke Detectors - SAFETY WARNING

Smoke detectors are regarded as very important to home safety. In Victoria now it is mandatory to have at least one installed. In some other States, installation is required when you are undertaking building work requiring a building permit. A condition of the permit may be that smoke detectors be installed as well.

Pool Regulations - SAFETY WARNING

Due to numerous child drownings, regulations governing pool fencing have become stricter over recent years. The intent of the Australian Standard 1926 adopted by the Building Code of Australia (BCA) is to prohibit access to swimming or wading pools from outside the property or from the house. Each State's requirements are slightly different, so check with your local council's building department for the relevant details. Fines are now in place for non-compliance.

Reduced scrutiny by authorities

The trend away from scrutiny of trades work by the governing utilities (eg: Water, Electrical, Sewerage, Drainage Authorities) continues. These days certificates of compliance are less the responsibility of the utilities and more the responsibility of tradespeople. You should therefore ensure for your own protection that electrical and plumbing work is only undertaken by contractors registered with their relevant authority, usually denoted by a registration number. You should select contractors who are insured against accident and negligence.

Builder/owner-builder work

In many States, builders need to provide "guarantees" on their work. This broadly means they take out insurance so that defects which become apparent over several years are remedied at no extra cost.

The work must be of significant value to invoke this guarantee (eg. a minimum of \$5,000 in Victoria) and in some States work like plumbing is exempted.

So when you engage a builder for significant work, make sure he is registered with the appropriate authorities and therefore his work is insured.

Owner-builders don't need to guarantee themselves that their building work is up to standard (although in Queensland for

example they need a Building Services Authority owner builder permit). In some States they need to provide insurance if selling within 7 years of the building permit or similar regulation, to protect subsequent owners. In such States, Inspection and Report on the building work is necessary first, by an authority like Archicentre, then building quality insurance is taken out by them.

Each States' requirements for building guarantees are different, so check with your council's building surveyor, your Building Services Authority or similar authority.

Illegal construction

By law, substandard existing extensions, renovations, home improvements and repairs become the responsibility of the home buyer. They may be dangerous, and/or they may have to be removed prior to further building work if very substandard. Check with the vendor or your solicitor to ensure that any works have been undertaken with local council building approval or you can personally make building approval enquiries of your local council's building department.

Further information on Safety issues and practices can be found in the Archicentre/Kidsafe Australia/Asthma Foundation Home Safety Checklist Technical Sheet available from Archicentre.

Victoria

530 Glenferrie Road
Hawthorn Victoria 3122
Tel: (03) 9819 4577
Fax: (03) 9819 5413

South Australia

100 Flinders Street
Adelaide SA 5000
Tel: (08) 8228 0300
Fax: (08) 8228 0333

New South Wales

479 Darling Street
Balmain NSW 2041
Tel: (02) 9555 5111
Fax: (02) 9555 5011

Australian Capital Territory

2A Mugga Way
Red Hill ACT 2603
Tel: (02) 6273 2353
Fax: (02) 6273 1953

Queensland

70 Merivale Street
South Brisbane
QLD 4101
Tel: (07) 3846 4957
Fax: (07) 3846 4970

Northern Territory

1 Shepherd Street
Darwin NT 0800
Tel: (08) 8941 4544
Fax: (08) 8981 3042

Tasmania

2 Castray Esplanade
Battery Point
Tasmania 7004
Tel: (03) 6224 4738
Fax: (03) 6224 1823

Western Australia

Shop 37
HomeBase Shopping Centre
55 Salvado Road
Cnr Harborne Street
Subiaco WA 6008
Tel: (08) 9382 4100
Fax: (08) 9382 4011

National Telephone 1300 13 45 13

www.archicentre.com.au

Archicentre Limited

ABN 34 001 866 520
A wholly owned subsidiary
of The Royal Australian Institute of Architects

