

Asbestos cement

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The name **fibro** is short for "fibrous (or fibre) cement sheet", more commonly called "asbestos cement sheet" or "AC sheet". It is a building material in which asbestos fibres are used to reinforce thin rigid cement sheets.^[1]

Although fibro was used in a number of countries, it was in Australia where its use was the most widespread. Predominantly manufactured and sold by James Hardie & Co. until the mid-1980s, fibro in all its forms was a very popular building material, largely due to its durability. The reinforcing fibres involved were almost always asbestos.

The use of fibro that contains asbestos has been banned in several countries, including Australia. As recently as 2016, the material has been discovered in new components sold for construction projects.^[2]

Asbestos is directly related to a number of life-threatening diseases including, asbestosis, pleural mesothelioma (lung) and peritoneal mesothelioma (abdomen). Fibre cement sheet is still readily available, but the reinforcing fibres are now cellulose rather than asbestos.^[3] However the name "fibro" is still applied to it for traditional reasons.



A pre-WW2 house in Darwin. The roof is sheeted with corrugated fibro sheets and the walls with flat fibro sheeting, with fibro battens covering the joints.

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Products used in the building industry

- Flat sheets for house walls and ceilings were usually 6 mm and 4.5 mm thick, in 900 and 1200 widths and from 1800 to 3000 long.
- Battens 50 mm wide x 8 mm thick used to cover the joints in fibro sheets.
- "Super Six" corrugated roof sheeting and fencing.
- Internal wet area sheeting, "Tilux"

- Pipes of various sizes for water reticulation and drainage.
- Moulded products ranging from plant pots to outdoor telephone cabinet roofs and cable pits.

Cleaning of asbestos cement

Some Australian states, such as Queensland, prohibit the cleaning of fibro with pressure washers, because it can spread the embedded asbestos fibres over a wide area. Safer cleaning methods involve using a fungicide and a sealant.^[4]



In popular culture

In the James Blundell & James Reyne song *Way Out West*, there was a reference to a fibro cement house, with the original Dingoes version of the song having a reference to a house of fibre cement. Also mentioned several times on the Australian TV show "Housos".

See also

- Fiber cement siding replaced asbestos-reinforced sheeting in the 1980s.
- Eternit

References

1. B.A.Group - Glossary (<http://www.baalliance.com.au/glossary.htm>) Archived (<https://web.archive.org/web/20060819213146/http://www.baalliance.com.au/glossary.htm>) August 19, 2006, at the Wayback Machine.
2. *Asbestos found in \$1.2b Perth Children's Hospital, says WA Health Minister*, ABC News, 14 July 2016, retrieved 3 October 2016
3. "Fibre Cement". Consumer Build. Retrieved 2012-06-05.
4. "Water Blasters" (PDF). Queensland Government. Retrieved 2016-01-31.

External links

- <https://web.archive.org/web/20061117143719/http://www.nsw.gov.au:80/fibro/>
- Advice if you have FAC in your home (<http://www.builderbill-diy-help.com/asbestos.html>)

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- This page was last modified on 17 November 2016, at 16:48.

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