ASBESTOS

(See also: Motor Vehicle Repair(55); Carcinogens(12))

INTRODUCTION

If you own, manage or have responsibilities for a workplace building that may contain asbestos, you need to think about the risk of exposure to workers and others who may use the building. You need to be able to identify, assess and manage any asbestos materials on your premises.

ASBESTOS - THE DANGERS

Asbestos is the greatest single cause of work-related deaths. Asbestos-related diseases (mesothelioma, asbestosis and lung cancer) are thought to kill up to 3,000 people each year, with these figures expected to rise until around 2010. These diseases take a long time to develop, which means that the people who are suffering and dying today were exposed to asbestos many years ago.

Huge amounts of asbestos were installed in buildings during the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, and much of it is still in place today. Electricians, plumbers, building maintenance workers, shopfitters and carpenters may **still** be at risk when carrying out refurbishment, repairs etc. on buildings which contain asbestos. It is also now thought possible that repeated low level exposures, such as could occur during routine repair work, may also lead to asbestos induced cancers.

There is no cure for asbestos-related diseases. Blue (crocidolite) and brown (amosite) asbestos are known to be more hazardous than white (chrysotile). **In general the more asbestos dust inhaled, the greater the risk to health.**

WHAT LAW APPLIES?

The Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations 2002
The Asbestos (Licensing) Regulations 1983
The Asbestos (Prohibitions) Regulations 1992

The Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations 2002(CAWR)
These regulations lay down the practices that must be followed for all work with asbestos, including that which requires a licence. Employers must prevent the exposure of employees to asbestos or, where this is not reasonably practicable, reduce exposure to a level that is as low as possible. The Regulations also require the:

- provision and cleaning of protective clothing;
- cleanliness of premises and plant;

- demarcation of designated "asbestos areas";
- monitoring of air for concentrations of asbestos;
- maintenance of health records and medical surveillance;
- provision of washing and changing facilities; and
- labelling of raw asbestos and asbestos waste.

The Asbestos (Licensing) Regulations 1983
These regulations require work with the most dangerous types of asbestos - coating, insulation (lagging) and asbestos insulating board, to be carried out **only by contractors who have a licence** issued by the Health and Safety Executive.

'Coatings' includes fire protection mixtures, applied by spray or hand, and decorative and textured finishes.
'Insulation' includes lagging and infill, preformed sections of pipe insulation and millboards
'Asbestos insulating board' is a lightly compressed board made from asbestos fibre and hydrated Portland cement or calcium silicate with other filler materials and can be used for structural purposes e.g. as a partition.
Not included are:
Articles made of rubber, plastic, resin or bitumen, but which also contain asbestos, e.g. vinyl floor tiles, electric cables and roofing felts; other asbestos products which may be used at high temperature but have no insulation purposes such as gaskets, washers, ropes and seals and asbestos cement products.

Asbestos cement, normally found in the form of roofing sheets, wall boards, soffits, gutters, drainpipes and flues, is a mixture of cement and asbestos which in a dry state has a density greater than 1 tonne per cubic metre. If you are unable to distinguish whether material is asbestos cement or insulating board, you will have to have a sample analysed to determine its bulk density.

There are 3 **exemptions from the requirement to hold a licence**:
a) work of short duration;
b) air monitoring or sample collection to identify asbestos;
c) if you are an employer carrying out work with your own employees. You will, however, still have to formally notify your enforcing authority (under Reg.5) of the work to be carried out.

'Work' includes sealing or painting damaged asbestos insulating board or insulation or coating.

CAWR also still applies even to exempt work and work with asbestos cement, which means that the precautions outlined in CAWR must be taken and Maximum Exposure Levels also apply.

If you think that exemptions (a) and (c) apply, you should consult the enforcing authority for further advice.

Notification to Enforcing Authority
You must give the relevant enforcing authority **14 days** written notice of your intention to carry out the work

The amended regulations also increase HSE's discretionary power to revoke a licence if the holder is found to be in breach of any health and safety legislation.

For details of licensed contractors and details of how to apply for a licence, contact the **HSE Asbestos Licensing Unit**, Belford House, 59 Belford Road, Edinburgh EH14 3UE Telephone: 0131 247 2135; Fax: 0131 247 2143.

The Asbestos (Prohibitions) Regulations 1992 as amended.
These regulations prohibit the importation into the United Kingdom, and the supply and use within Great Britain, of amphibole asbestos - crocidolite (blue) asbestos and amosite (brown) asbestos, and, as amended in 1999, of chrysotile (white) asbestos. These regulations do not cover the supply and fitting of asbestos-containing vehicle brake linings. This is prohibited by separate regulations from the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions - **The Road Vehicles (Brake Linings Safety) Regulations 1999**

Proposed Duty to Manage Asbestos

WHERE IS ASBESTOS FOUND IN BUILDINGS?
- Sprayed/loose packed asbestos - eg. as fire breaks in ceiling voids
- Sprayed coatings and laggings - eg. insulation of pipework
- Sprayed asbestos & cement mixture - fire protection
- Insulating boards - fire protection, thermal insulation
- Some ceiling tiles
- Asbestos board/paper products in electrical equipment
- Asbestos cement products - roofing & wall cladding
- Certain textured coatings

In general, the materials that contain a high percentage of asbestos are more easily damaged and the above list is roughly in order of ease of fibre release.

MANAGING ASBESTOS

Asbestos may be present if the building was constructed or refurbished between 1950 - 1980 and particularly if it also has a steel frame and/or boilers with thermal insulation. If present, you will **need to know** the location, form and condition of the material. You might need to arrange to analyse samples of materials that you suspect contain asbestos. Do not break or

damage such material - samples should only be taken by suitably trained people (look for UKAS or NAMAS accredited companies under 'Laboratories' or 'Analytical Research Chemists' in Yellow Pages).

ASBESTOS

Assessing the condition of asbestos materials involves considering the risk of asbestos fibres being released into the air:

- Is the material being/likely to be disturbed?
- Is the surface damaged, frayed or scratched?
- Are surface sealants peeling or breaking off?
- Is the material becoming detached from its base?
- Are protective coverings missing?
- Is there asbestos dust or debris in the immediate surrounding area?

Deciding what to do depends on the condition and type of the material:

a) Good condition/not likely to be damaged/not likely to be worked on

>>> Safest to leave the material in place and introduce a management system.
For this to be effective the owner/occupier of the premises must be in a position to exercise control over access by workers, contractors etc. and be prepared to exercise that control.

b) Poor condition/likely to be damaged or disturbed
>>> Need to repair, seal, enclose or remove

Taking action offers a number of options:

Asbestos left in place

- If it is in good condition establish an asbestos management system i.e. keep records and/or a register of where the asbestos is; label materials with warning signs or colour coding so that those who need to know are alerted to its presence
- Damaged materials can be repaired and either sealed or enclosed to prevent further damage You will still need to label etc. such areas as part of an asbestos management system.

Periodic Inspection is required to ensure the condition of the material has not changed

Removal of Asbestos

This should take place where dust release is likely, repair or protection is not practical or where the material is likely to be disturbed during routine maintenance work.

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Remember that work on asbestos insulation board, coating & lagging (including sealing & removal) must normally be done only by a contractor licensed by the HSE.

DISPOSAL OF ASBESTOS

Asbestos waste should be double-bagged in heavy-duty polythene bags and clearly labelled with the prescribed label before it is transported to an appropriately licensed disposal site.

The landfill site situated at Tuttle Hill in Nuneaton is licensed to receive asbestos waste.

WHAT YOU SHOULD TELL YOUR WORKERS/CONTRACTORS

- **Details** about any asbestos materials (location, type etc.) and make them aware of any asbestos register. Referral of any enquiries etc should be to an appropriate nominated person identified in the management system.

- **Precautions** to be taken if necessary i.e.

  1) Never strip out asbestos insulation - the law requires a specialist contractor to do this to strict rules.

  2) Where minor work on materials containing asbestos (e.g. asbestos cement) is to be carried out by workers/ contractors, make sure that they know they are working with asbestos and what precautions they should take e.g.

  3) In brief:
     - keep all unnecessary personnel out of the work area
     - take care not to create dust
     - keep the material wet whenever possible
     - wear a suitable respirator and protective clothing
     - clean up with a type 'H' vacuum cleaner
     - not to break up large pieces of asbestos materials
     - not to use power tools
     - not to expose unprotected workers
     - not to take protective clothing home to wash.

Always refer to current guidance or contact the Health and Safety Team for further advice.

CHECKLIST - ASBESTOS

1.	Do you know or suspect if any asbestos materials are present in your workplace?	YES	NO
2.	Have you examined the original building plans or asked the owner (or architects if they can be tracked down) to establish if and where any asbestos materials were used?	YES	NO
3.	If suspected asbestos materials have been found has an analysis been arranged to confirm the type etc. of the asbestos?	YES	NO
4.	If asbestos has been found, have you addressed its condition and decided what to do, seeking expert advice as necessary?	YES	NO
5.	If asbestos is to be left in place have you established a management system to record details (location, type etc.) inform appropriate personnel and periodically inspect?	YES	NO
6.	Should work be required on asbestos insulation and lagging, are you aware that this normally must be done by a licensed contractor?	YES	NO
7.	If work is carried out on asbestos materials have you passed on relevant information and instructions to employees, safety representatives and contractors?	YES	NO
8.	If no examination of suspect material has been carried out, have you assumed that the material is asbestos, labelled it accordingly and introduced strict procedures to be observed for monitoring its condition and ensuring that it is not disturbed?	YES	NO

REFERENCES/FURTHER DETAILS

Publications

1. A short Guide to Managing Asbestos in Premises (HSE) (INDG223) single copy free (ISBN 0 7176 2564 8 **£5.00). http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg223.pdf

**2. Working with Asbestos in Buildings – (1999) (INDG 289) (0 7176 1697 5). www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg289.pdf

**3. Asbestos Alert - A workers information card for building, maintenance, repair and refurbishment works INDG 188 (1995) HSE. 0 7176 1209 0. www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg188.pdf

4. *Asbestos and you* INDG107 (rev) **FREE (available in packs of 15 ISBN 0 7176 1241 4 **£5.00**)

5. Asbestos Dust - The Hidden Killer: Essential advice for building maintenance, repair and refurbishment workers IND(G) 187L (6/97 C300) HSE. **FREE (available in packs of 10 ISBN 0 7176 1208 2 (**£5.00**). www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg187.pdf

*6. The Control of Asbestos at Work: Approved Code of Practice (L27) 1999 0 7176 1673 8(£6.75)

*7. A Guide to the Asbestos (Licensing) Regulations 1983 (L11)(1999) (0 7176 2435 8) (£6.00)

*8. Work with asbestos insulation, asbestos coating and asbestos insulating board etc. - Approved Code of Practice (L28) ISBN 0 7176 1674 6 (£6.75)

*9. Working with asbestos cement (HSE)(HSG 189/2)(1999) 0 7176 1667 3 (7.50)

*10. Booklet HSG 210-Asbestos Essentials: Task Manual. (HSE). ISBN 0 7176 18870.

*11. Booklet HSG 213-Introduction to Asbestos Essentials(HSE). ISBN 0 71761 901X.

**12. Leaflet IND(G)255 - Asbestos Dust Kills - Keep Your Mask On (Guidance for employees on wearing RPE for work with asbestos) (1999)(0 7176 1696 7). www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg255.pdf

*13. Controlled Asbestos Stripping Techniques for Work Requiring a Licence (HSG189/1) ISBN 0 7176 1665 5

**14. Selection of Suitable Respiratory Protective Equipment (INDG288). www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg288.pdf

15. Managing Asbestos - A guide to Your New Legal Duties www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/manageasbestos.pdf

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* Available to view by prior arrangement at Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council, Environmental Health Services, Council House, Coton Road, Nuneaton. CV11 5AA

** Free copy available from Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council at the above address.

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