

## ASBESTOS

***It is not company policy that any worker shall be directly involved in any work to do with asbestos.*** Where required specialist companies, duly licensed, will be employed to remove asbestos where an assessment indicates this to be necessary. The company will comply with the Control of Asbestos Regulations (2012) and has carried out a survey of asbestos in buildings under its control. However, the presence or otherwise cannot be guaranteed and the purpose of this section is to provide information and procedures to employees if they suspect the presence of asbestos. Where low-levels of asbestos are present, following the procedures herein will provide adequate protection for employees. No work shall be carried out on suspected asbestos containing materials without first consulting managers.

### **What is asbestos?**

There are three main types of asbestos - chrysotile, amosite and crocidolite: they are usually called white, brown and blue asbestos respectively. However they cannot be identified just by their colour.

Blue and brown asbestos (the two most dangerous forms) have not been imported into the UK for nearly 20 years and are now banned by law. However, construction and maintenance workers may still come across them:

- In stripping out old insulation from buildings
- In the demolition and clearance of former industrial sites and premises including power stations
- In fire doors and ceiling tiles.

In particular plumbers, carpenters, electricians and cabling engineers may also come across asbestos during routine repair, installation or refurbishment work. Asbestos insulating board is particularly common in buildings constructed before 1980 and was used in fire doors, ceiling tiles, internal walls and panels.

### **What Are The Risk From Asbestos?**

Asbestos-related diseases are currently responsible for about 3000 deaths a year in Britain. There is usually a long delay between first exposure to asbestos and the onset of disease. This can vary between 15 to 60 years. The vast majority of those now dying were exposed to asbestos during the 1950s and 1960s, before the current regulations were introduced.

Work with asbestos can release small fibres into the air. Breathing in these fibres can cause fatal diseases. But provided the asbestos is intact, it does not pose a risk to health.

### **How Does Asbestos Get Into The Body?**

Although the body will get rid of most of the larger fibres that can enter the nose and mouth, tiny fibres can pass into the lower parts of the lung. They can stay there for years and in some cases work their way through the lung lining. The body naturally gets rid of any asbestos fibres that you might take in with food and water, and asbestos fibres cannot be absorbed through your skin.

## What Does Asbestos Do?

Breathing in asbestos fibres can eventually lead to a number of diseases. These include:

- Asbestosis or fibrosis (scarring) of the lungs
- Lung cancer
- Mesothelioma, a cancer of the inner lining of the chest wall or abdominal cavity.

## THERE IS NO CURE FOR ASBESTOS RELATED DISEASES

Until recently it was thought that those now dying from asbestos-related diseases were exposed to large amounts of asbestos either regularly or during a single spell of work lasting from a few weeks to a few years. It is now thought possible that repeated low level exposures, during routine repair work, may also lead to asbestos-induced cancers. The scientific evidence on exactly what levels of exposure cause disease is unclear. **But we do know the more asbestos dust you inhale the greater the risk to your health.**

If you come across something during construction or maintenance work which you think may be asbestos, **stop work and tell your supervisor and/or health and safety representative.** Report the finding immediately to Head Office so that arrangement can be made for sampling and tests to be carried out by people trained to do so **under no circumstances should any employee make any attempt to touch or deal with the suspected material until cleared to do so.**

## Licensed, Non-Licensed and Notifiable Non-Licensed Work

Since April 2012 there are three classifications of work that can be done with asbestos.

Licensable work with asbestos is:

- (a) work where the exposure of employees to asbestos is not sporadic and of low intensity; or
- (b) work for which the risk assessment demonstrates that the control limit will be or is liable to be exceeded; or
- (c) work on asbestos coating; or
- (d) work on asbestos insulating board or asbestos insulation for which the risk assessment demonstrates that the work:
  - (i) is not sporadic and of low intensity; or
  - (ii) will be or is liable to exceed the control limit; or
  - (iii) is not short duration work.

Non-Licensed work will normally include the following, (assuming in all cases exposure is *sporadic and of low intensity* and will not exceed the control limit):

- i. short, non-continuous maintenance work involving AIB which is in good condition. For example, drilling holes in AIB to attach fittings or to pass through cables/pipes, cleaning light fittings attached to AIB, repairing very minor damage, e.g. a single broken corner, lifting ceiling tiles for inspection or access purposes.
- ii. short, non-continuous maintenance work on asbestos cement (AC).
- iii. removal of AC. Weathered AC is likely to be able to retain the vast majority of fibres in its matrix and so should not normally be regarded as *degraded*. Most

- AC can be removed whole and the inadvertent breakage of the occasional piece during manual removal will not attract NNLW requirements.
- iv. short, non-continuous maintenance work on textured decorative coatings. For example, drilling holes, inserting screws.
  - v. removal of textured decorative coatings when this can be achieved without deterioration of the material eg. by careful cutting around backing sheets to achieve removal intact.
  - vi. removal, for example, of gaskets or asbestos rope cords from heating appliances which can be left in situ for disposal or can be lifted out virtually intact, without substantial breakage.

Notifiable Non-Licensed work will normally include, (assuming in all cases exposure is *sporadic and of low intensity* and will not exceed the control limit):

- i. minor maintenance work involving asbestos insulation where the work to be done meets the definition of '*short duration work*', i.e. work which does **not** require a licence. For example, repairing minor damage to a small section of pipe insulation where the exterior coating has been broken or damaged.
- ii. minor removal work involving AIB where the work to be done meets the definition of '*short duration work*', i.e. work which does **not** require a licence. For example, removing AIB panels fixed with nails or screws. (Note: the definition '*short duration work*' will only apply to asbestos insulation and AIB).
- iii. removal work involving textured decorative coatings where the method of removal requires *deterioration* of the material. For example, where the material is treated by steam, hydrating gel etc and scraped off the underlying surface.
- iv. removal of asbestos paper and cardboard products if not firmly bonded in a matrix.
- v. maintenance work on asbestos cement (AC) which cannot be described as short and non-continuous, but which does **not** require a licence because exposure is *sporadic and of low intensity* and will not exceed the control limit.
- vi. removal of AC which is substantially *degraded* eg. badly fire damaged material, or where significant breakage (*deterioration*) is unavoidable to achieve removal, but which does **not** require a licence because exposure is *sporadic and of low intensity* and will not exceed the control limit.

Short-term work is defined as work carried out by any one person for less than one hour in a seven-day period.

The total time spent by all workers on the work in a seven-day period should not exceed a total of two hours including ancillary work liable to disturb asbestos

## Requirements

Licensed work requires:

- i. licensing
- ii. notification 14 days in advance
- iii. emergency arrangements
- iv. designation asbestos areas
- v. medical examination every 2 years
- vi. health records
- vii. compliance with risk assessment, control of exposure and training requirements

Notifiable Non-Licensed work requires:

- i. notification before work starts
- ii. medical examinations every 3 years
- iii. health records
- iv. compliance with risk assessment, control of exposure and training requirements

Non-licensed work requires:

- i. compliance with risk assessment, control of exposure and training requirements

Medical Records

- i. Medical examinations must include an examination of the chest and be carried out by a registered medical practitioner who holds a licence to practice as specified in the revised regulations.
- ii. Registers of work (health records) -must contain details of the individual worker; the nature and duration of work with asbestos and exposure; and dates of the worker's medical examinations. More detailed medical records will be kept by the doctor. Registers of work (health records) must be kept for 40 years.

For Notifiable Non-Licensed medicals must be carried out on commencement and every three years thereafter. There is a transition period from the introduction of the CAR 2012 Regulations which means that medicals are not required until 2015

For Licensed work the medicals are carried out before commence of work and every two years thereafter. There is no transition period for this work

### **Notification**

Both licensed and notifiable non-licensed work require that the appropriate authorities must be informed prior to the commencement of work. Notification can be done online at [www.HSE.gov.uk](http://www.HSE.gov.uk)

### **Training**

All work involving asbestos is covered by the Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012. Employers are required by these regulations to protect employees and anyone else who may be affected by their work (e.g. visitors, and people living in the neighbourhood) from exposure to asbestos. Regulation 10 requires employers to provide training commensurate with potential exposure. Employees may encounter suspected asbestos containing materials and therefore will be trained in Asbestos Awareness. In accordance with Reg 10 Paragraph 127 (a, b, c & d) of the Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012, the following topics will be covered:

- § Types of Asbestos
- § Properties of Asbestos
- § Effects on Health and risk for smokers
- § Presence of Asbestos in Buildings
- § The Risks
- § Avoiding Risks from Asbestos
- § Emergency Procedures

Training will be undertaken every two years as recommended by UKATA with refreshed training every 12 months. The company will follow the UKATA Guidelines Tool Box Talk for the refresher training

The employer is required to:

- Assess your likely exposure to asbestos before you start any work
- Take steps to prevent your exposure or reduce it to the lowest level possible
- Make sure that you are fully aware of the risks to your health of breathing in asbestos dust, and that you are properly trained to use the control measures provided, included when necessary a mask/respirator
- Issue you with protective clothing
- Provide adequate washing facilities and, if appropriate, changing facilities and separate storage facilities for protective clothing and for personal clothing
- Monitor your exposure to asbestos when there is doubt about the level of exposure, or to check the effectiveness of control measures
- Provide you with a mask/respirator if you are likely to be exposed to asbestos dust levels higher than those described in the Regulations as the control limits.

### **Protecting your own health?**

Before commencing work on any property read **The Asbestos Survey Report**

Under the Control of Asbestos at Work regulations directives, all operatives must avail themselves to read through, and understand the appropriate Asbestos Survey report.

This report identifies the types of asbestos found within the property and the location. This report must be available to all operatives, contractors and visitors to the building prior to any works being undertaken.

However, this report should not be considered to be definitive. As construction works proceeds there may be several areas within the building that may be subject to further clarification or survey. Large amounts of known and suspected asbestos must be removed by an approved asbestos removal contractor. If in doubt report suspected materials to the appointed person.

If required to work with asbestos you must be fully trained. Guidance on all work with asbestos can be found in the HSE's "Asbestos Essentials" and the guidelines therein **MUST** be followed. In brief and as a minimum:

- Make full use of the control measures provided by your employer
- Use protective clothing and a mask/respirator when required and make sure that they fit properly
- Don't go into a 'respirator zone' without wearing the correct mask/respirator
- Follow any recommended working procedures to reduce dust levels, e.g. use hand tools rather than power tools when cutting asbestos, but if power tools are necessary, use the lowest possible speed; **and keep the material damp whenever possible**

- Keep the work area clean by using the equipment provided by your employer, e.g. a special 'H' type vacuum cleaner
- Make sure that all waste material is put in a polythene bag labelled with the asbestos warning sign
- Co-operate if asked to wear a device to measure your exposure while you work. This is for your benefit because it will show whether you need extra protection, e.g. a different type of mask/respirator
- Don't smoke. Working with asbestos plus cigarette smoking increases the risk of lung cancer. If you can't stop smoking, cut down as much as possible
- Wash your hands and face thoroughly before eating, drinking or smoking
- Don't eat, drink or smoke in the working area
- Don't take home clothing contaminated with asbestos. Wash and change before you go home.
- **Hygiene procedures**

Adequate hygiene facilities (where appropriate) will be supplied to enable employees to maintain a satisfactory standard of cleanliness to protect themselves and others.

Employers must by law do everything they reasonably can to protect their workers. The employees also have a duty to co-operate with them to do all you reasonably can to protect yourself and those around you.