

## H2 – Opening Statement

### Asbestos

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Every year there are thousands of asbestos related deaths. Asbestos fibres accumulate in the lungs, therefore several diseases can occur, among these are two main types of cancer:

- mesothelioma (considered to be almost exclusively related to asbestos exposure)
- lung cancer (a malignant tumour of the bronchi).

The 10 occupations found to have the highest risk of mesothelioma for males were:

- Metal plate workers
- Vehicle body builders
- Plumbers and gas fitters
- Carpenters
- Electricians
- Sheet metal workers
- Electrical plant operators
- Production fitters
- Construction workers, and
- Electrical engineers.

The Asbestos Procedure is an invaluable document aimed at responsible managers which outlines all aspects of dealing with the three main types of asbestos found in the workplace. The procedure assists employers to comply with The Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations (introduced from May 2004) which place a duty on those responsible for commercial premises to manage the asbestos contained in them.



## H2 – Asbestos

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### What is this?

This is a written procedure which explains the arrangements for identifying and controlling asbestos in the workplace.

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### The person responsible for implementing this procedure is:

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### What is asbestos?

Asbestos is a naturally occurring mineral. It has been used in industry for decades because of its high resistance to heat and chemicals. There are three main types of asbestos:

- Crocidolite (blue)
- Amosite (brown)
- Chrysotile (white)

Some basic facts regarding the control of asbestos:

- Asbestos is only dangerous when disturbed. If it is safely managed and contained, it doesn't present a health hazard.
  - Do not remove asbestos unnecessarily; removing asbestos can be more dangerous than leaving it in place and managing it.
  - Not all asbestos materials present the same risk; the measures that need to be taken for controlling the risks from materials such as pipe insulation are different than those needed for asbestos cement.
  - Do not assume that you need to call in a specialist in every case (for example, you can inspect your own building rather than employ a surveyor as long as you have received suitable training). However, if you do contact a surveyor, ascertain that they are competent.
  - If you are unsure about whether certain materials contain asbestos you can presume they do and treat them accordingly.
  - Remember that the duty to manage is primarily about putting into place the practical steps necessary to protect maintenance workers, and others, from the risk of exposure to asbestos fibres. The responsible manager should not focus solely on the removal of all asbestos from his premises.
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### Where is it found?

The most common use of asbestos is in the following products:

**Sprayed asbestos fire protection:** Usually found on steelwork in buildings, the spray contains 80-90% asbestos. It tends to be dusty, weak, friable and easily damaged. Dust release can be very high.



**Asbestos cement building products:** This is grey, hard and very brittle and contains 10–15% asbestos. It has been widely used for the manufacture of corrugated roof sheeting, rainwater guttering and pipework, roofing tiles and slates, soffit boards, flat sheeting, partitioning, door facings, water pipework and cisterns, etc. Dust release is negligible unless the cement bonding the fibres deteriorates.

**Asbestos insulating board:** Asbestos board has the appearance of a grey or off-white board or tile. It differs from asbestos cement in that it is a softer material and contains more asbestos which can range from 15–40%. Its main uses have been for fire protection on doors, structural steelwork, protected exits, internal wall cladding, ceilings (in tile or board form), cladding over electrical cabling, and as an insulating layer in composite wall construction and partitions. It is prone to mechanical damage and can therefore easily deteriorate under normal service conditions. The disturbance of this material may create high levels of dust.

**Asbestos millboards:** Millboards and papers are approaching 100% asbestos and thus contain very little binding agent. When disturbed it is most likely to give rise to substantial dust release.

**Textured ceiling finishes (paint and artex):** The asbestos content was normally about 4%. Dust release under normal operation is negligible but fibre release can occur if the coating is abraded or otherwise worked upon.

**Roofing felt:** Roofing felt often contains asbestos paper impregnated with bitumen and is normally coated with sand or chalk. In this case, the asbestos fibre is fully 'locked up' in the bitumen and is unlikely, during normal on-site operations, to generate respirable asbestos dust. However, if the bitumen is burnt or removed by solvents then airborne asbestos fibre release may occur.

**Floor tiles and coverings:** The asbestos content is not normally above 25%. Since the asbestos is 'locked up' in the material, dust release under normal use is likely to be negligible unless the tiles have become damaged or worn.

**Lagging:** All lagging should be treated as containing asbestos unless it is definitely known to be asbestos-free by testing. Often the lagging is protected by cladding or other forms of encapsulation protection and only becomes hazardous when disturbed. The asbestos fibres can easily be released if the material is subject to mechanical abrasion, and is often very dusty if degradation of the material has occurred.

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## Who is responsible?

The responsible manager must ensure:

- An asbestos risk assessment is undertaken to identify all relevant hazards on his/her site (remember to consult architects, employees and safety representatives).
- An asbestos management plan is developed. (If no asbestos-containing materials are present, then do nothing other than record why the evidence indicates there is no asbestos present).
- The condition of any asbestos and the progress of any control measure is monitored against an agreed timetable.
- The management action plan is displayed at suitable locations around the site.
- That signage is put into place where asbestos is present.
- All employees, contractors and visitors are informed of the asbestos management plan and the relevant hazards and control measures.
- The plan is kept under review.



## How is an asbestos risk assessment completed?

The person completing the assessment must be trained and deemed competent. He/she will then:

- Identify material which he/she thinks may contain asbestos.
- Score the materials according to the assessment criteria sheet (see below):
  - What is the extent of damage?
  - What is the product type?
  - Is the surface of the material treated?
  - How often is the material likely to be disturbed?
  - How frequently is the area used?
  - How often does maintenance impact on this area?
- **Add up all the scores** and record the total score on the assessment sheet.
- Consider whether corrective action is needed to make the asbestos safe:
  - If 'None' then monitor the conditions and implement the management plan.
  - If 'Yes' or 'Unsure' then, if safe to do so, take a sample of the material and take advice from a specialist asbestos contractor.
- Keep the sheet with the management plan.

## What is included in the assessment criteria?

### Extent of Damage/Condition

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Good condition — No visible damage      | 0 |
| Low damage — Surface marks/broken edges | 1 |
| Medium damage — Breakage of materials   | 2 |
| High damage — Visible asbestos debris   | 3 |

### Product Type

|   |   |
|---|---|
| PVC/reinforced plastic, Vinyl product/mastics, Bituminous material, Cement products, Galbestos material, Textured coating | 1 |
| Insulating board, Paper products, Gaskets, Woven products   | 2 |
| Insulation, Spray coating   | 3 |

### Surface Treatment

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Sealed   | 0 |
| Poor surface treatment                                 | 1 |
| Unsealed/bare — Insulating board, Cement products, etc | 2 |
| Unsealed/bare — Insulation, Spray coatings             | 3 |



## Location

|                              |   |
|------------------------------|---|
| Outdoors                     | 0 |
| Large room                   | 1 |
| Room up to 100m <sup>2</sup> | 2 |
| Confined space               | 3 |

## Disturbance

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Usually inaccessible or unlikely to be disturbed | 0 |
| Occasional disturbance                           | 1 |
| Easily disturbed                                 | 2 |
| Routinely disturbed                              | 3 |

## Frequency of use of area

|            |   |
|------------|---|
| Infrequent | 0 |
| Monthly    | 1 |
| Weekly     | 2 |
| Daily      | 3 |

## Frequency of any maintenance activities in area

|                          |   |
|--------------------------|---|
| None                     | 0 |
| Less than once per year  | 1 |
| More than once per year  | 2 |
| More than once per month | 3 |

## Asbestos Risk

|        |   |
|--------|---|
| 1 – 7  | Monitor at routine intervals and, if necessary, seek professional advice          |
| 8 – 21 | Seek professional advice to ensure the appropriate control measures are in place. |

## What should be included in the asbestos management plan?

The asbestos management plan should be clear and include:

- Details of how and when the assessment(s) were carried out.
- Results of the assessment(s).
- A detailed action plan that includes:
  - The actions required
  - How monitoring will take place
  - A timetable for the actions
  - Who is responsible for their completion.



- Communication and training arrangements, and
  - Appropriate procedure for the review of the action plan including:
    - Who will undertake the review
    - When the review will be completed.
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## **Does the responsible manager or contractor need an asbestos licence?**

An employer or self-employed person who undertakes work with asbestos insulation, asbestos coating or asbestos insulating board may only do so in accordance with a licence issued by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). This requirement is necessary as these three types of the application of the asbestos-containing materials are far more hazardous.

Before any work commences on licensed asbestos, the authorised contractor needs to inform the HSE 14 days prior to any work being carried out.

Any work that is carried out with asbestos cement sheeting does not require the need to notify the HSE, and is therefore not covered under the aforementioned regulations. However, a competent person (authorised contractor) still needs to carry out any work with this material.

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## **Legislation**

- Control of Asbestos Regulations 2006
  - Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974
  - Management of Health and Safety Regulations 1999
  - Control of Substances Hazardous to Health 2002
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## **Associated documentation**

- Asbestos risk assessment H&SASB01

