



**Consultants in Industrial Health
Safety and Environmental Management**

Asbestos

Asbestos is a naturally occurring mineral and because of its excellent fire retarding and insulating properties it was widely used in the building industry until the mid 1980s. Any building built before 2000 could have asbestos in it. Research has shown that breathing in asbestos fibres may cause lung disease and cancer and it is currently the greatest single cause of work-related deaths in the UK with several thousand people dying each year.

There is a long delay between asbestos exposure and disease typically between 10 and 50 years.

The use of asbestos is now banned but if existing asbestos materials are in good condition, they can be left where they are as long as their condition is regularly checked to ensure they do not become damaged.

Asbestos types

The three main types of asbestos that have been used commercially are:

- blue
- brown
- white.

In practice, asbestos cannot be identified by colour alone as its appearance can change, depending upon how it was manufactured or treated. They are all hazardous.

Products where the asbestos is bound tightly in a matrix (eg. Asbestos cement sheets or flooring tiles) are less hazardous than products such as pipe lagging which easily give off fibres, but all products need careful handling by trained workers.

If there is asbestos where you work:

- know where asbestos is and avoid disturbing it
- assume that materials contain asbestos (unless there are good reasons not to do so)
- check your organisation's written record of the location of asbestos (the Asbestos Register and the Asbestos Management Plan)
- regularly re-check the register for new information
- follow all health and safety instructions
- if you see any damage to asbestos, stop work and report it immediately to your supervisor.



Where might you find asbestos in a building?

- Roof and walls
- boilers and pipework
- ceilings
- interior walls/panels
- floor tiles
- artex ceilings decoration
- flooring materials
- ceiling tiles
- ventilation systems
- domestic appliances
- old fire blankets
- water tanks.





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Working with asbestos

- Most work with asbestos must be undertaken by a licensed contractor
- asbestos waste is hazardous waste and has to be disposed off correctly
- stringent precautions are required for any work with asbestos to avoid risks and contamination
- asbestos dust is fine and invisible to the naked eye.

Remember: The only way to reliably check if asbestos is present is to have a sample of the material examined in a laboratory. All asbestos containing materials (ACMs) must be treated with caution

*If you think you have found asbestos, **immediately inform your supervisor or safety representative.***

Legislation and resources

- The Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012 SI 2012/632
- Approved Code of Practice: Managing and Working with Asbestos, L143 (2nd Edition), HSE
- Asbestos: The Licensed Contractors' Guide, HSG247
- Asbestos: The Analysts' Guide for Sampling, Analysis and Clearance Procedures, HSG248
- Asbestos Essentials, HSG 210
- Asbestos: The Survey Guide, HSG 264
- A Comprehensive Guide to Managing Asbestos in Premises, HSG 227
- A free downloadable Beware Asbestos App from HSE at <http://www.beware-asbestos.info/>

**For further information on Asbestos and our
Asbestos Awareness course contact us
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