

Information sheet

Removal of asbestos from buildings prior to demolition

Asbestos was used extensively as a building material in England and Wales from the 1950s through to the mid 1980s. Although some of this material has been removed over the years, there are many thousands of tonnes of asbestos still present in buildings. Over half a million non-domestic premises currently are thought to have some form of asbestos in them. It is estimated that asbestos related diseases still account for 4000 deaths per annum.

You are most likely to come across asbestos in the following materials:

- Sprayed asbestos and asbestos loose packing – generally used as fire breaks in ceiling voids.
- Moulded or preformed lagging – generally used in thermal insulation of pipes and boilers.
- Sprayed asbestos – generally used as fire protection in ducts.
- Fire breaks, panels, partitions, soffit boards, ceiling panels and around structural steelwork.
- Asbestos insulating board (AIB) used for fire protection, thermal insulation, partitioning and ducts.
- Miscellaneous use of AIB off-cuts as spacers and packing (this use is often not recorded)
- Some ceiling tiles.
- Millboard, paper and paper products used for insulation of electrical equipment. Asbestos paper has also been used as a fireproof facing on wood fibreboard.
- Asbestos cement products, including gutters, rainwater pipes and water tanks and corrugated sheets, largely used as roofing and wall cladding.
- Certain textured coatings.
- Bitumen roofing material.
- Vinyl or thermoplastic floor tiles.

Due to its widespread use, asbestos is liable to be present in any pre-2000 buildings, so you cannot presume such buildings are free from it.

There is a legal requirement to remove most asbestos-containing materials (ACMs) from buildings before demolition and you should ensure that this is done, where it is reasonably practicable. There may be some circumstances where the risks involved in the removal of the ACMs out-weigh the residual risks of leaving them in-situ. This could apply for example to textured coatings and floor tiles. Please refer to The Control of Asbestos Regulations 2006 and [Asbestos Liaison Group Memo 02/08: "Demolition and lower risk ACMs"](#) for further information.

You must have full information on the presence (or absence) of ACM before demolition of a building. This will require an asbestos survey unless you already have the information you need. The survey must be a Type 3 full

access sampling and identification survey. You should confirm that the individual or organisation chosen has adequate, relevant training experience and a quality management system. They should be competent and able to carry out the survey in accordance with MDHS 100, “[Surveying, sampling and assessment](#) of asbestos containing materials”. To assess their competence, you can check that organisations are accredited for surveying by the [United Kingdom Accreditation Service](#) (UKAS), www.ukas.com or that individuals have personal certification through the ABICS (www.abics.org) or NIACS (www.niacs.org.uk) schemes.

The client must ensure that the surveyor is given full access to all areas. In our experience many reports of Type 3 surveys contain such clauses that excuse the company from carrying out full access sampling. For example, they can exclude access above 2 metres and into false ceilings, areas where it is dark or areas where there might be live power and locked rooms. These excuses are not acceptable, as any area not accessed may contain asbestos, with the risk that it could be disturbed and spread during demolition. The client needs to be aware of the implications of failure to access all areas and should ensure that full access sampling is undertaken.

Information from the survey about ACMs must be made available to potential contractors and any others who may disturb and be exposed to asbestos as a result of the demolition work.

Asbestos cement sheet and textured coating (artex) materials can be removed by non-licensed contractors, but should be done in accordance [with Asbestos Essentials – Information sheets](#).

Most other asbestos materials must be removed by a contractor licensed by the Health and Safety Executive in accordance with Asbestos – The Licensed Contractors Guide (HSG 247). The licensed contractor will be required to provide notification to the HSE or the local enforcing authority in writing at least 14 days before commencing work. There is a list of licensed contractors available on the HSE website - [HSE Web Communities – Asbestos Licensing Information – Asbestos Licence Holders](#).

When work with asbestos is completed the work area should be thoroughly cleaned before being handed over for demolition. Where the work is licensable, a four stage clearance procedure should be carried out and a certificate of re-occupation issued by a UKAS accredited asbestos analyst.

If at any stage during the demolition process asbestos is suspected, the work should stop immediately and the material should be investigated.

Further information regarding your duties concerning asbestos can be found at:

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/campaign/index.htm>

References:

1. HSG 247 – 'Asbestos: the licensed contractors' guide
2. L143 – 'Approved Code of Practice, Work with asbestos containing materials.'
3. HSG 210 – 'Asbestos Essentials'

Telephone HSE Books 01787 881 165 for copies of the above guidance.