

## 14. Asbestos

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## 1. What is Asbestos?

There are three main types of asbestos, the blue and brown being the most dangerous, though these have not been imported into the country for over 20 years:

Chrysotile	white
Amosite	brown
Crocidolite	blue

Unfortunately it isn't always possible to identify them by their colour alone as during the ageing process it can become greyish and discoloured. In addition when it combines with other substances the colour can change.

Since 24 November 1999 the use of nearly all asbestos containing products has been prohibited. This includes second hand products. There are a few very special products that contain asbestos that can still be used but they are highly unlikely to be required in a village hall. However it is important to note that anyone undertaking construction and maintenance work may still come across asbestos containing materials. Most buildings over 15 years old are likely to contain materials that have asbestos content. These materials can be found when:

- stripping out old insulation from buildings
- demolishing and clearing former industrial sites and premises
- fire doors and ceiling tiles.

Plumbers, carpenters, electricians and cabling engineers may also come across asbestos during routine repair, installation or refurbishment. Particularly common uses were:

- as a spray coating on steel work, concrete walls and ceilings, for fire protection and insulation
- as insulation lagging in buildings and factories, on pipework, and for boilers and ducts as asbestos insulating board, such as Asbestolux and Marinite, used as wall partitions, fire doors, ceiling tiles etc
- as asbestos cement products such as sheeting on walls and roofs, tiles, cold water tanks, gutters, pipes and in decorative plaster finishes.

## 2. What is the risk?

For anyone carrying out any type of maintenance, repair or refurbishment work in buildings over about 15 years old they could be exposed to asbestos dust without realising it. Although the quantities may be small, if this happens repeatedly, it could lead to disease in later life.

**The more asbestos dust breathed in the greater the health risk and for those who smoke the risk of lung cancer is greatly increased. There is no cure for asbestos related diseases.**

### 3. The management of asbestos materials

The Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations 2002 introduced an explicit duty to manage asbestos in non-domestic premises in June 2002. It came fully into force in May 2004. If you own, occupy, manage or have responsibilities for premises which may contain asbestos, you will either have **a legal duty to manage the risk from asbestos**; or a duty to co-operate with whoever manages that risk.

The village hall management committee has to:

- take reasonable steps to find asbestos in the premises and assess the condition of the materials
- presume that materials do contain asbestos unless there is strong evidence that they do not
- prepare a record of the location and condition of the materials and assess the risk from them
- prepare and implement a plan to manage the risk
- provide information on the location and condition of the material to anyone who is liable to disturb it

### 4. What should you do?

If asbestos is located in the building then a decision has to be made on what to do about it. If it is in good condition and is not likely to be damaged or worked on or disturbed it is usually safer to leave it in place and manage it. If it is in poor condition or is likely to be damaged, the village hall management committee will have to decide whether it should be repaired, sealed, enclosed or removed.

#### 4.1 Surveys

The village hall management committee can locate asbestos and note its condition by carrying out a simple walk through survey. The HSE publication 'Managing Asbestos in Premises' provides useful information on identification. If a situation arises where maintenance work may disturb or remove the asbestos, testing and a full survey will be necessary.

Concern has been expressed about the added cost burden to village hall management committees for survey charges. In Derbyshire the average cost of a survey and reports to meet the requirements of the legislation would be an average £360.00 plus VAT. However, the regulation is not a duty to survey; any survey will only be a step towards managing the asbestos.

#### 4.2 Walk through survey

- Note whether the possible asbestos is evident in lagging, ceiling tiles or partition walls and if any of it is chipped, breaking up or cracked.
- Label the location that you think may have asbestos with warning signs (special labels are available).

- Mark on a plan of the building where the asbestos is present.
- If you are not sure if you have found asbestos then a sample will need to be taken and analysed by an expert. The village hall management should not attempt to do this themselves.

### 4.3 Who to notify

The village hall management committee must inform anybody involved in building and maintenance work of the location, condition of the asbestos and the potential risks to their health if they disturb it. This will include plumbers, carpenters and engineers installing telephones, computers or other electrical equipment.

### 4.4 Safe working procedures

Particular care needs to be taken when working with old insulation board, ceiling tiles, cement sheeting and other material. If they need to be cut, drilled, sanded or handled they should be treated as if they contain asbestos. **Never strip out insulation yourself. The law requires that a specialist contractor does this to strict rules.**

The following safe working procedures should always be followed:

- keep asbestos materials (including waste) damp whilst working on them
- don't use power tools on asbestos materials. They create dust; use hand tools instead
- wear protective equipment eg respirator mask; disposable overalls etc
- make sure the wearer knows how to use a mask; that it is clean and should it have a separate filter that this is regularly changed. All of these should be disposed of as asbestos waste
- don't allow waste to accumulate, clean up as you go
- put the waste in a suitable container (heavy duty polythene bag), put that into a second container and label it clearly to show that it contains asbestos
- clear up all asbestos dust using a dustless method (it is best to use a `Type H vacuum cleaner),if this is not possible use damp cloths and dispose of them as asbestos waste. Do not use brooms or brushes
- ensure you wash your hands and face before eating, drinking and smoking at the end of the day's work
- do not take home for washing any used disposable overalls that have been worn; these should be sent to a specialist laundry.

Please note that all waste material that contains asbestos is classified as special waste and has to be disposed of by a licensed contractor to a tip licensed to take asbestos containing materials.

## 5. Further information

More information is available about working with asbestos from your local Health and Safety Executive, or Local Authority Environmental Health Officer, both of whom are listed in your local telephone directory.

### Useful Publications

HSE – Managing Asbestos in Premises can be downloaded from the HSE Site [www.hse.gov.uk/campaigns/asbestos](http://www.hse.gov.uk/campaigns/asbestos)

HSE Information Sheet - Asbestos

HSE leaflet for employees - Asbestos and You

HSE pocket card - Asbestos alert for building maintenance, repair and refurbishment workers.

HSE priced and free publications are available from HSE Books, PO Box 1999, Sudbury, Suffolk CO10 6FS. Tel: 01787 881165 Fax: 01787 313995.

### Acknowledgement

ACRE gratefully acknowledges the assistance received from The Asbestos Information Centre Limited, ATSS House, Station Road East, Stowmarket, Suffolk IP14 1RQ (01449 770028) in the preparation of this information sheet.