



Efficiently Maintaining Commercial Buildings...



Asbestos Awareness

What are the risks?

Asbestos was used extensively between the 1950s and 1980s in both domestic and commercial buildings and although its use was banned in the UK in 1999 it can still be found in many properties. We should assume that asbestos is present in all pre-2000 buildings.

Asbestos in good condition and not damaged should not present a risk however any activity such as maintenance or modernisation that may damage or disturb the fibres must be monitored and assessed.

Airborne asbestos fibres that are inhaled could result in diseases of the lungs and chest lining:

- **Asbestosis**
Fibres lodge in lungs & cause inflammation that heals, leaving scars, and lungs lose ability to oxygenate blood.
- **Mesothelioma**
Cancer of the lining of the lungs, abdomen or heart – can take 20-50 years to develop.
- **Lung Cancer**
Asbestos increases the risk of lung cancer.
- **Diffuse Pleural Thickening**
Inhaled fibres may work their way to the pleura causing it to thicken leading to breathing difficulties.
- **Pleural Plaques**
This is the least serious form of asbestos induced disease. 'Plaques' are scars in the lining of the lung.

Past exposure to asbestos currently kills around 4,000 people a year in Great Britain and this number is expected to go on rising at least until 2016.

There is no cure for asbestos-related diseases.

It is essential to manage this risk.

What is Asbestos?

Asbestos is a generic term for a group of fibrous silicates belonging to two groups of minerals:

- Serpentine
- Amphiboles

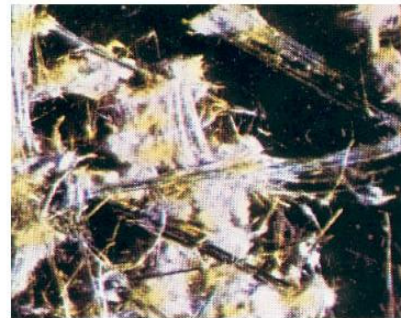
There are three main types of asbestos still found in properties:

- 'blue asbestos' (crocidolite)
- 'brown asbestos' (amosite)
- 'white asbestos' (chrysotile).

You cannot identify them just by their colour.

Chrysotile White Asbestos

- Soft curly appearance.
- Flexible with high tensile strength.
- Susceptible to low level chemical attack.
- Was the most common form used?

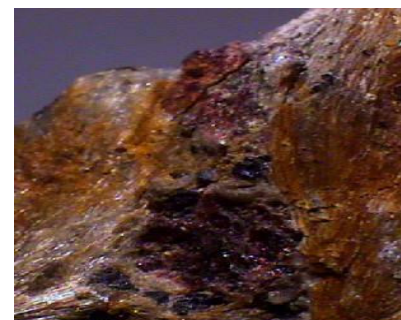


Common usage:

- Asbestos corrugated sheets
- Asbestos cloth
- Asbestos rope and yarn
- Asbestos flooring tiles

Amosite Brown Asbestos

- Straight bundles of flexible fibres
- Needle like
- Easily split
- Moderate tensile strength
- Resistant to acids



Common usage:

- Asbestos insulating board
- Sprayed asbestos coatings
- Asbestos insulation

Crocidolite Blue Asbestos

- Straight flexible and elastic
- Very high tensile strength
- Resistant to chemical attack
- Very high thermal stability

Common usage:

- Asbestos cement 1950-1969
- Asbestos mill board and paper
- Asbestos mastics, sealers and putties



All are dangerous carcinogens however blue and brown carry the greatest risk.

A Landlord's Duty

Under Regulation 4 of the Control of Asbestos Regulations 2006, landlords have certain duties towards their tenants to minimise the risks of exposure to asbestos.

The legislation defines a landlord as the duty holder, that is, the person or organisation that has clear responsibility for the maintenance or repair of non domestic premises through a tenancy agreement or contract.

The extent of the landlord's duty will depend on the nature of the agreement.

The landlord's duty covers all non-domestic premises, including industrial, commercial or public buildings such as factories, warehouses, offices, shops, hospitals and schools.

However, non-domestic premises also include 'common' areas of certain domestic premises such as purpose-built flats or houses converted into flats.

Common areas include:

- Foyers, corridors, staircases
- Lifts and lift shafts
- Boiler rooms, plant rooms, store rooms
- Roof spaces, gardens, yards, outbuildings, garages etc.

The Health and Safety Executive put together an asbestos checklist to assist with managing asbestos in premises:

- Find out if asbestos is present at the premises.
- Presume material is asbestos until proved otherwise.
- Survey and sample for asbestos.
- Assess the condition of the asbestos containing material.
- Record where the asbestos or presumed asbestos is and its condition. Put together a drawing or plan of its location.
- Assess the potential risk of the asbestos and whether it is likely to be damaged or disturbed.



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- Decide what to do.
- Take appropriate action.
- Check what you've done.
- Monitor and review effectiveness of plan.

Any handling of asbestos should be performed by a specialist contractor.

We know that the more asbestos fibres breathed in, the greater the risk to health that is why it is important that Asbestos containing materials are identified and that everyone who works with them take appropriate precautions.



Where is Asbestos Commonly Found in Buildings?

- Sprayed coatings, lagging and insulating board
- 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
- Asbestos cement sheets around structural steel work
- Insulating boards used for fire protection, thermal insulation, partitioning, ducts and as soffits, wall panels and some ceiling tiles
- Millboard, paper and paper products used for insulation of electrical equipment.
- Asbestos paper has also been used as a fire-proof facing on wood fibreboard.
- Asbestos cement products, which can be fully or semi-compressed into flat or corrugated sheets. Corrugated sheets are largely used as roofing and wall cladding. Other asbestos cement products include gutters, rainwater pipes and water tanks
- Textured coatings
- Bitumen roofing materials
- Vinyl or thermoplastic floor tiles



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CAUTION IS THE KEY WORD WHEN IT COMES TO ASBESTOS.

If you suspect or are aware of asbestos in your premises contact a specialist to ensure that you and your tenants are not at risk.

If you would like more information please contact us, alternatively information can be found at:

- <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg223.pdf>
- <http://www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/campaign/duty.htm>