

SUMMARY

General guidelines on managing the risk

Organ builders have a “duty of care” under the Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations to assess and manage the risk in their workshop, and in the organs they look after.

IN THE WORKSHOP

- Find out if there is asbestos (or presumed ACM), its amount and what condition it is in
- Keep an up-to-date record of its location and condition
- Assess the risk, prepare a plan and take the steps needed to put your plan into action
- Review the plan at regular intervals
- Provide information on the location and condition of the material to anyone who is likely to disturb it

Asbestos in good condition - If the asbestos is unlikely to be damaged or disturbed it is usually safer to leave it in place and manage it.

Asbestos in poor condition - Seek specialist advice. UKAS can give advice on accredited organisations:
Email: info@ukas.com or phone 020 8917 8400

IN CHURCH, CHAPEL OR CONCERT HALL

- Check on the presence of asbestos in the blower cabinet
- Inform the church of the likely presence of asbestos, and its location.

Make a note of the location of any non-asbestos material which could be mistaken for asbestos.

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DEALING WITH ASBESTOS

Advice for organ building professionals

WHY IS ASBESTOS DANGEROUS?

Breathing in air containing asbestos fibres can lead to asbestos-related diseases, mainly cancers of the lungs and chest lining.

There are three main types of asbestos still found in premises. These are commonly called ‘blue asbestos’ (crocidolite), ‘brown asbestos’ (amosite) and ‘white asbestos’ (chrysotile). All of them are dangerous, but blue and brown asbestos are more hazardous than white. You cannot identify them just by their colour.

It is now illegal to use asbestos in the construction or refurbishment of any premises, but many thousands of tonnes of it were used in the past and much of it is still in place. As long as it is in good condition and not likely to be disturbed or damaged there is no risk. But if it is disturbed or damaged, it can become a danger to health, because asbestos fibres are released into the air and people can breathe them in.

WHERE IS ASBESTOS FOUND?

Some asbestos containing materials (ACMs) are more vulnerable to damage and more likely to give off fibres than others. In general, the materials which contain a high percentage of asbestos are more easily damaged.

The list overleaf is roughly in order of ease of fibre release (with the highest potential fibre release first). Sprayed coating, lagging and insulating board are more likely to contain blue or brown asbestos. Asbestos insulation and lagging can contain up to 85% asbestos and are most likely to give off fibres.

Work with asbestos insulating board can result in equally high fibre release if power tools are used. On the other hand, asbestos cement contains only 10%-15% asbestos. The asbestos is tightly bound into the cement and the material will only give off fibres if it is badly damaged or broken.

You are most likely to come across asbestos in these 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, firebreaks, panels, partitions, soffit boards, ceiling panels and around structural steel work;
- insulating boards used for fire protection, thermal insulation, partitioning and ducts, often in blower silencing cabinets;
- 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;
- Certain textured coatings;
- Bitumen roofing material; and
- Vinyl or thermoplastic floor tiles.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU SUSPECT YOU HAVE FOUND ACMs

A new duty to manage asbestos has been added to the Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations. It applies to everyone who has maintenance and repair responsibilities for non domestic premises. The duty will require you to manage the risk from asbestos by:

- Finding out if there is asbestos, its amount and what condition it is in. Checking on the presence of asbestos in blower cabinets applies to tuners, and their “duty of care”;
- Presuming materials contain asbestos, unless you have strong evidence that they do not;
- Making and keeping up to date a record of the location and condition of the ACMs or presumed ACMs;
- Assessing the risk from the material;
- Preparing a plan that sets out in detail how you are going to manage the risk from this material;
- Taking the steps needed to put your plan into action;
- Reviewing and monitoring your plan and the arrangements made to put it in place; and
- Providing information on the location and condition of the material to anyone who is liable to work on or disturb it.

IS IT ASBESTOS?

The HSE recommends that if you have any doubts about the material you have found it is safest to presume that it contains asbestos. It is most important you do not break or damage any material which may contain asbestos in an attempt to identify it.

You may need samples of materials analysed that you suspect might contain asbestos. Often this is the only certain way of identifying if a material does contain asbestos. Samples should only be taken by suitably trained people.

The United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS) has developed an accreditation scheme for organisations which do asbestos surveys. An accredited company is likely to employ suitable trained people for this type of work. UKAS can be contacted on 020 8917 8400 or e-mail them at info@ukas.com for information on accredited organisations.

DECIDING WHAT TO DO

For asbestos in good condition

If the asbestos is;

- In good condition; and
- Is not likely to be damaged; and
- Is not likely to be worked on or disturbed;

It is usually safer to leave it in place and manage it.

For asbestos in poor condition

If the asbestos is in poor condition or is likely to be damaged or disturbed you will need to decide whether it should be repaired, sealed, enclosed or removed. If you are unsure of the condition of the asbestos and cannot decide what action to take seek specialist advice from either an asbestos surveyor, a laboratory or a licensed contractor. You must make sure that everyone who needs to know about the asbestos is effectively alerted to its presence.

It can save time and prevent confusion if you make a note of the location of non-asbestos material which could be mistaken for asbestos.

HOW CAN YOU DISPOSE OF ASBESTOS?

Asbestos waste, whether this is small amounts of waste or large-scale waste removed by contractors, is subject to waste management controls set out in the Special Waste Regulations 1996. Asbestos waste should be double-bagged in heavy duty polythene bags and clearly labelled with the label prescribed for asbestos, before it is transported to a disposal site. The waste can only be disposed of at a site licensed to receive it. Your local authority will have information on licensed sites in the area.

Remember most work on asbestos insulation, asbestos insulating boards and lagging, including sealing and removal should normally be done by a contractor licensed by HSE.

Some useful contact information:

Asbestos Removals Contractors Association,
ARCA House, 237 Branston Road,
Burton upon Trent,
Staffordshire DE14 3BT

Telephone: 01283 531126

Asbestos Control and Abatement Division,
TICA House, Allington Way,
Yarm Road Business Park,
Darlington DL1 4QB

Telephone: 01325 466704