

## Asbestos Awareness Refresher Training - Revised Guidelines

### Asbestos Awareness

Paragraph 147 of ACoP L143 Work with materials containing asbestos states “*Refresher training should be given at least every year and should be appropriate to the role undertaken. Those persons who require only awareness training could have refresher training as part of other health and safety updates. Employers should identify the specific training needs of their employees so that the refresher training can be appropriately tailored. It should not be a repeat of the initial training*”

### Introduction

Such training is required to be given to employees whose work could foreseeably expose them to Asbestos. In particular it should be given to all demolition workers and those workers in the refurbishment, maintenance and allied trades where their work may disturb the fabric of the building because Asbestos Containing Materials (ACM's) may become exposed during their work.

In accordance with Regulation 10, Paragraph 127 (a,b,c & d) of the Control of Asbestos Regulations 2006, this guidance is prepared to answer a number of questions covering three broad topics. It will outline the following:

- a. What asbestos is, why it is dangerous and in what materials you might find it.
- b. How to determine if there is asbestos containing material in the area where you are going to work
- c. What are the emergency decontamination procedures that are in place in the unlikely event that you think that you may have disturbed some asbestos material or have become contaminated in some way.’

**Asbestos is only dangerous if you can breathe in, or ingest, the fibres (dust). Solid asbestos containing material is very low risk. It becomes high risk if it is damaged or the surface deteriorates so that fibres are released either by material falling off or people brushing against it.**

### 1. Operations resulting in exposure to Asbestos:

The Regulations indicate that almost all workers within the Construction Industry will come across ACM's. These include (although not limited to):

- General Maintenance Staff
- Plumbers
- Painters & Decorators
- Plasterers
- Roofers
- Electricians
- Gas Fitters
- Joiners
- Demolition Workers
- Shop Fitters

### 2. Types of Asbestos:

There are three main types of fibrous asbestos:

Chrysotile (White)

Grunerite /Amosite (Brown)

Crocidolite (Blue)

Serpentine Group

Amphibole Group

Amphibole Group

There are a further three types which were very rarely used within the UK but do arise as trace elements (all are in the Amphibole Group)

- Anthophyllite
- Actinolite
- Tremolite

### 3. Properties of Asbestos:

- Good thermal insulator
- Good electrical insulator
- Good sound insulator
- Incombustibility
- Reinforcing and binding agent
- Stable at high temperatures
- High tensile strength similar to steel
- Long flexible fibers
- Does not degrade over time

### 4. What Types of Asbestos are Dangerous

- All types of asbestos are Category 1 Carcinogens
- Amphiboles are Extremely dangerous
- Serpentine is Only slightly less dangerous

### 5. Entry into the body:

- Three routes: By breathing it in; Ingestion; Skin absorption
- Diseases likely to develop include -
- Asbestosis
- Lung Cancer
- Mesothelioma

### 6. Health Effects:

- It can take anywhere from as little as 10 years to over 60 years plus from initial exposure to the development of disease and the symptoms of cancer appearing.
- This latency period means that many workers may become ill years after they leave a job or have been exposed.
- Many do not remember when or where they were exposed to asbestos, therefore it is very difficult to take court action as many people have had more than one employer.
- If you work with Asbestos on a regular basis, your risk of an asbestos related disease is 1:8, however if you smoke your chances increase to 1:2 If you are exposed to Asbestos and you smoke your risk of lung cancer is increased to more than 50 times the rate expected in non-smokers with no asbestos exposure
- Asbestos related diseases are virtually inoperable
- Asbestos related diseases cause 1% of all male deaths in the EU (This is rising)
- Single very large exposure can potentially kill

### 7. Asbestos in Buildings:

- Asbestos has been used within over 4,000 products, the vast majority of which we are building materials-these include the following ACM's: -
  - roof sheets
  - doors
  - wall linings
  - textured coatings (artex)
  - boilers
  - guttering
  - ceilings,
  - vinyl tiles
  - fuse boxes
  - pipe work

Above list is limited. New products are regularly found which contain asbestos.

## 8. The Risks of Fibre Release from ACM's

High	Medium	Low
Limpet sprayed coatings	Cements (including roof sheets and flues)	Thermoplastic floor tiles Mastics, sealants, putties etc
Thermal insulation-lagging to pipes, boilers and calorifiers	Fire blankets and curtains	Bitumen roofing felts
Insulation Boards	Paper production	Textured coatings (artex) & paints

## 9. What The Law Requires is to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the best standards of Health, Safety and Welfare at work.

In particular (with regards to asbestos) it is necessary to ensure:

- all employees who may disturb asbestos are trained appropriately (at least Asbestos Awareness)
- all are inducted on the contents of Asbestos Register for all works they undertake.
- all have in system for employees to report any possible Asbestos findings

**Health and Safety at Work Act:** It is essential for everyone to understand and follow all H&S regulations and requirements otherwise prosecution may result, with heavy fines and even imprisonment likely.

## 10. How do I know where the asbestos is?

- The law requires owners and managers of sites to establish if there are any asbestos containing materials on their site and to know where they are. This is normally recorded in an asbestos register.
- They must make you aware of this when you come to site. If they don't then you should ask.
- Emergency decontamination procedures need to be in place for the site and they should also be explained to you. If they are not then you should ask.

Further, if you suspect asbestos to present where you are working, either in material in place or as fallen debris around you then:

- Stop work immediately
- Inform those around you
- Everyone should leave the area where asbestos is suspected
- Contact your line manager and await their further instructions

## 11. Emergency Procedures:

It is of utmost importance that you determine the site's or your company's asbestos procedure and for you to be refreshed on what actions are taken in the event of:

**'Suspected' disturbance of ACM's** - where doubt exists you must treat all materials as Asbestos, until either the duty holder or your company arrange for sampling and analytical testing.

**'Known or potential' exposure to ACM's** – If you believe that you may have been exposed and/or contaminated with asbestos material

- a) raise the alarm immediately by getting someone else to report the incident to your supervisor or manager or the person in charge.
- b) do not go into occupied areas or buildings until help arrives as you could spread the asbestos contamination.
- c) follow instructions which may involve the need to wear respiratory protective equipment and/or protective coveralls, as well as showering in a decontamination unit.

**NB. Personal Protective Equipment:**

- *Face Mask (COSHH – Regulation 7 Para 150 – “Employers should ensure that the selected facepiece is of the right size and can correctly fit each wearer. For a tight-fitting facepiece (filtering facepieces usually known as disposable mask, half & full face masks) the initial selection should include fit testing to ensure the wearer has the correct device. The test will assess the fit by determining the degree of face seal leakage of a test agent while RPE user is wearing the facepiece under test”)*
- *Coveralls - They must be Type 5 Category 3, elasticated at the cuff, ankles and hood to prevent the ingress of fibres*
- *Coveralls must be worn over the straps of the face mask which is worn under the hood.*

**Legislation & Guidelines:**

- CAR-Control of Asbestos Regulations 2006 including Regulation 4 (The Duty to Manage)
- ACOP – Approved Code of Practice L143
- CDM Regulations 2007 and ACoP L144
- HASWA -Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- COSHH – Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002
- MHSWR - Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- The Hazardous Waste (England and Wales) Regulations 2005
- Special Waste Scotland Regulations 2004