

A lungful of Asbestos

Don't take the gamble

A lungful of asbestos fibres is not the sort of present any one wants, but many building trades workers are being unwittingly exposed, warn Warwick District Council's Occupational Safety and Health team this month.

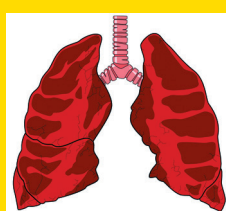
The team has joined with the Health & Safety Executive to deliver a strategic programme to reduce accidents, ill health and sickness absence from work activities. Asbestos related disease is the biggest occupational health killer in the UK. Of the 3,500 people currently dying each year from such diseases, 25% have once worked in the building and maintenance trades and often would have worked unknowingly on or near to asbestos-containing materials.

The main focus is to raise awareness of the risks associated with exposure and that asbestos remains a threat if tradesmen come into contact with it in buildings constructed before 2000.

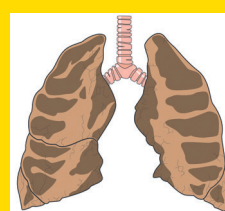
Since May 2004 people with responsibilities for workplace buildings have been under an obligation to ensure that anyone working on the building is told about any materials that do or may contain asbestos, so that adequate precautions can be taken. By now, they should have in place arrangements to ensure this happens. Everyone in the building trade is urged to demand this information, whether it is from the building landlord or their own employer.

Assessment and enforcement action

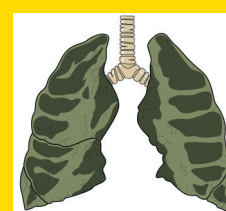
To help the Council target the campaign more effectively, over the next few months authorities in Warwickshire will be using a range of interventions to assess compliance of businesses, duty holders, (the person or organisation with clear responsibility for the maintenance and repair of the premises) with the 'Duty to Manage Asbestos', raise awareness and seek compliance through enforcement action where appropriate.



Healthy



Damaged



Diseased

Duty Requirements

Those in control of premises must:

Provide information on the location and condition of the materials to anyone who is liable to work on or disturb them . . . builders, plumbers, electricians, carpenters and other allied trades . . . ->

That means you !

They must also:-

- determine location(s) & condition of materials likely to contain asbestos, (ACMs - Asbestos Containing Materials)
- presume materials contain asbestos unless there is strong evidence that they do not
- make and keep an up to date record of actual and suspect ACM location and condition
- assess the risk of anyone being exposed to fibres from these materials
- prepare a plan showing how risks from materials are to be managed and put it into action.

Where is asbestos found in buildings?

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
- 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.

Although these are the most likely uses and places where asbestos will be found, asbestos was used in many other materials. If you are in doubt, it is safer to presume that a material contains asbestos, unless there is strong evidence that it does not.

Refurbishment – think first – Is it asbestos free?

Asbestos Exposure. If in doubt - don't rip it out!

Asbestos fibres may be released when:

- Drilling holes
- Cutting with hand and power tools
- Breaking up materials
- Dismantling/demolition

Asbestos was used extensively as a building material in GB 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. It is estimated that over half a million non-domestic premises currently have some form of asbestos in them. There is extensive repair and removal work, which will continue for the foreseeable future.

For further information please contact your local Council's occupational safety & health team, in confidence on:

Warwick District Council: 01926 456713

email : ehsafety@warwickdc.gov.uk

web : <http://www.warwickdc.gov.uk/WDC/Business/Health+and+safety/FIT3.htm>