

Asbestos in the Workplace Guidance

What is it?

Asbestos is a naturally occurring fibrous material that was extensively used as a building material in the UK from the 1950s through to the mid-1980s. It was used for a variety of purposes and was ideal for fireproofing and insulation. Any building built before 2000 (houses, factories, offices, schools, hospitals etc) may contain asbestos. Asbestos materials in good condition are safe unless asbestos fibres become airborne, which happens when materials are damaged either accidentally or disturbed during maintenance or repair works.

The presence of asbestos alone should not be a cause for concern. Asbestos only becomes a risk to human health when it is released into the air and breathed in.

Duty holders – those who are responsible for maintaining or repairing non-domestic premises – are required to actively manage any asbestos in buildings. This provides a practical way to identify, prioritise and properly plan the actions that need to be taken to manage the risks. Where asbestos containing materials are assessed as being in good condition and not in a position where they are likely to be damaged they should be left in place and monitored. However, where asbestos is in poor condition or is likely to be damaged during the normal use of the building, it should be sealed, enclosed or removed, as appropriate. Those considered most at risk of exposure to asbestos fibres are tradesmen and maintenance workers who disturb the fabric of buildings during the course of their work. Precautions must be taken to ensure that trades people don't put themselves, staff, patients or others at risk by disturbing asbestos.

Some of the more common uses of Asbestos in buildings

Sprayed coatings: generally used as fire protection on structural support columns and beams. This is a high hazard asbestos product and can generate very high fibre levels if disturbed.

Pipe Insulation: Asbestos thermal pipe lagging is a high hazard asbestos product and can generate very high fibre levels if disturbed

Asbestos insulating board ceiling and door panels (also known as AIB) AIB is a high hazard asbestos product and can generate high levels of fibres if the board is cut or drilled.

AIB window panels Similar to other AIBs this is a high hazard product, if it is in good condition it should be left undisturbed.

Textured decorative coatings (such as Artex) Textured coatings contain relatively small amounts of asbestos, the asbestos is well bonded as such fibres are not easily released, however it is still an asbestos product and as such requires to be managed safely.

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The above list is not exhaustive and is intended to highlight the differing ways in which asbestos has been used in the past.

Asbestos Management

The NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde Policy on the Management of Asbestos is designed to conform to the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, the Asbestos (Licensing) Regulation 1983 and the Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations 2012. The Policy and Procedures will apply to all buildings and all individuals employed and/or engaged by the organisation without exception. This includes directly managed staff and or appointed Contractors.

In support of the Policy the Facilities Directorate (including Capital Planning and Operational Estates) will have an appointed competent person or persons identified to ensure so far as is practicable that:

All GGC properties are assessed and surveyed where applicable in order to identify any asbestos containing materials that may be present therein, and to prepare and maintain an Asbestos Register for all buildings. This Register will undergo annual reviews or more frequently if deemed necessary, and will be updated after any treatment and/or removal works have been undertaken.

Implement an effective asbestos management plan in order that appropriate measures such as encapsulation, labelling, inspection, working with, removal of, and any subsequent disposal of the material can be safely undertaken.

Ensure that all relevant Contractors and Sub Contractors engaged to carry out work on any NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde properties are provided with a summary, listing all relevant asbestos locations, and are advised of the appropriate precautions and procedures to be followed.

Ensure that information regarding the presence of asbestos is contained in tender documentation as may be appropriate and that Contractors and Sub Contractors have in place Risk Assessments and/or Method Statements for its removal or management as appropriate.

All Managers and Staff should be assured that the Management of Asbestos within GGC is strictly monitored and controlled. The Health and Safety Executive have in place strict licensing requirements relating to Contractors who are involved in working with the material, in the majority of cases, work with asbestos needs to be done by a [licensed contractor](#). This work includes most asbestos removal, all work with sprayed asbestos coatings and asbestos lagging and most work with asbestos insulation and asbestos insulating board.

Where required, Managers and Staff will attend Health and Safety training in relation to the risks associated with asbestos and the asbestos management process.

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What to do if you have concerns regarding asbestos:

In the first instance report your concerns to the person in charge of the area e.g. Senior Charge Nurse, Administration Manager etc Do not attempt to touch, remove or undertake any investigation works. The Person in Charge should contact the Site Facilities Manager in order that they can assess the situation and advise accordingly. The outcomes of any Estates investigation should be relayed back to the staff member that raised the concerns.

What to do if you feel you may have been exposed to Asbestos.

If you are concerned about possible exposure to asbestos from work activities, report this immediately to your line manager who will inform Health and Safety. You are advised to consult your GP and ask for a note to be made in your personal record about possible exposure, including date(s), duration, type of asbestos and likely exposure levels (if known). In some circumstances, your GP may refer you to a specialist in respiratory medicine. The HSE does not advocate routine X-rays for people who have had an inadvertent exposure to asbestos. Asbestos-related damage to the lungs takes years to develop and become visible on chest X-rays. X-ray examinations cannot indicate whether or not asbestos fibres have been inhaled.

The Organisational Asbestos Register is held and where required maintained by Facilities, it would be good practice to hold a copy of the register for the immediate service area within the Health and Safety Management Manual.

Where this is required please contact your local Site Facilities Manager.

Further guidance and information can be accessed from:

www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos