

Asbestos Awareness Toolbox Talk

Key Learning Point - KLP

Purpose of TBT

This talk is to highlight the types of Asbestos containing materials (ACMs), where they are likely to be found and how to ensure you protect yourself.

What is Asbestos?

Asbestos is a naturally occurring fibrous silicate mineral material. There are 6 types of Asbestos, but the main three that were used commercially in the construction industry were: Chrysotile (White Asbestos); Amosite (Brown Asbestos); Crocidolite (Blue Asbestos). The colours do not refer to how they look, but their raw mineral state. It is generally impossible to tell the type of asbestos just by looking at it.

It is very resistant to heat, electricity and chemical damage and it absorbs well, which is why it was seen to be versatile and used for fire-proofing and as an insulation material. It was used from 1950's until 1985, when blue and brown asbestos were banned outright in the UK. It wasn't until 1999 when the import, sale and second-hand reuse of white asbestos was outlawed. It is still used in the USA, Russia, China, India to name a few countries.

It is a killer, and currently kills more people per year than driving accidents. The current estimate is around 5,000 people a year from all kinds of industries die from asbestos related diseases.

The Asbestos removal industry estimates that there are over 3,000 types of products that are Asbestos Containing Materials. Buildings made pre-2000 are likely to have some form of ACMs.

Where can you find Asbestos?

Asbestos can be found:

- **In insulation and sprayed coatings used for:** - boilers, plant and pipework (some are obvious, but some are hidden in underfloor ducting) - fire protection steelwork - hidden behind false ceilings - in thermal and acoustic insulation of buildings
- **In insulating board used in:** - fire protection to doors, protected exits and steelwork - claddings on walls and ceilings, internal walls, partitions and suspended ceiling tiles - fire blankets
- **In asbestos cement, which is found as:** - corrugated roofing and cladding sheets of buildings - flat sheets for partitions - cladding and other door facings - rainwater gutters and downpipes

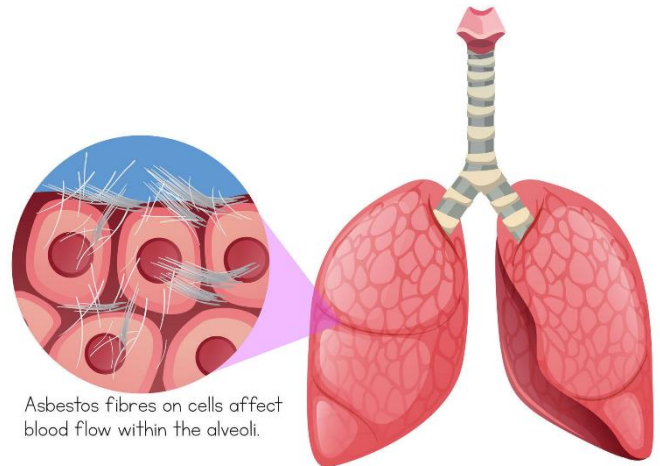
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You will not be able to tell the type of Asbestos just by looking at it.



How does Asbestos affect you?

When ACMs are disturbed, respirable fibres are released into the air. The fibres when inhaled penetrate deep into your lungs, specifically into the alveoli in the lungs, and they will remain there. Over time, they scar lung tissue, which causes the tissue to become stiff. This then causes breathing to become difficult as the scarring progresses. Eventually, the lung tissue becomes so stiff that it is unable to contract and expand normally.



What to do if you suspect Asbestos is present?

Prior to undertaking any work in buildings (built before the year 2000) that has the potential to disturb ACMs, employers must ensure that a suitable survey is undertaken, and that work is planned to prevent workers from being exposed. This may involve removal or encapsulation of the ACMs, which must always be done by a competent contractor who will often need to hold the appropriate license awarded by the HSE.

Make sure that you are given information regarding the possible presence of ACMs before working in any building built before the year 2000.

If you are not sure what a material is, do not disturb it until, you are sure. If you think that you have discovered or disturbed an ACM, **Stop** any work, remove and keep all persons out of the area. Where practicable close or seal or lock off the area. **Do not remove any equipment or material.**

Inform your line manager immediately, who will take appropriate action by **Preparing and displaying a 'Potential Asbestos hazard, Keep out'** sign to prevent persons from gaining access to the area. The area will be inaccessible to work in until the material is confirmed as either Asbestos containing material or not.

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If unsure of the material or suspect Asbestos, **STOP** work and do not disturb it. Report immediately.

Need Support with your Health and Safety?

At Sureteam our advice is always practical, pragmatic and personalised to the needs and environment of your business and staff.

We work with companies across a range of sectors and can be involved in one-off projects or longer-term consultancy. We can carry out tasks like risk assessments or train your staff to be able to do them.

For more information take a look at [our website](http://www.sureteam.co.uk) or call our friendly team on 01666 50386 to discuss your needs.