

WHAT ARE THE DANGERS?

Undisturbed, asbestos poses no risk to health. However, if it deteriorates or is drilled into, sanded or broken up or damaged, it releases dust containing microscopic fibres.

If breathed in, these fibres can lodge in the lungs and cause fatal diseases, such as lung cancer and mesothelioma. Most alarmingly, the time lag between breathing in asbestos fibres and developing asbestos-related diseases can be up to 40 years – so a significant exposure today could be a death sentence in years to come.

WHO IS MOST AT RISK?

People working in construction and related trades are most at risk from exposure to asbestos. This includes carpenters, plumbers, heating and ventilation engineers, plasterers, painters and decorators, electricians, telecoms engineers, floorers and tilers.

ASBESTOS FACT

In Britain, around **5,000 people die every year** from asbestos-related cancer

WORKING TOGETHER TO BEAT OCCUPATIONAL CANCER

www.notimetolose.org.uk

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ARE YOU PROTECTED?

Asbestos dust can kill you.



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WHAT IS ASBESTOS?

Asbestos is the name given to a group of minerals widely used in building materials such as insulating boards, flooring materials, spray coatings, lagging, sealants, adhesives, reinforced plastics and other products. Its use and reuse is now banned in the UK and other countries, but thousands of tonnes of asbestos-containing materials remain in place in buildings and elsewhere.

ASBESTOS FACT

Asbestos claims well over **100,000 lives a year** worldwide

WHAT YOUR EMPLOYER SHOULD DO

The law is different from country to country, so you'll need to find out what's in place where you work.

Your employer should:

- **Find out where asbestos is located** to protect workers and others who may be exposed to it. They should carry out a systematic survey (in the UK this is called a management survey) to identify where there are asbestos-containing materials in the building, plant or equipment. If invasive construction work is to be undertaken, then a refurbishment or demolition survey is needed.
- **Create a record** (in the UK, this is called an asbestos register) that identifies what asbestos is found and where.
- **Complete a risk assessment** which considers who might be exposed to asbestos dust and what tasks will they be doing that may damage the asbestos-containing material and create dust.
- **Create a management plan** covering all locations where asbestos-containing materials have been found.
- **Plan work to avoid disturbing asbestos** either by designing other solutions or by removing the asbestos before the work is carried out.
- **Inform those who are potentially exposed where the asbestos is** and what precautions they must implement to keep themselves and others safe.
- **Train workers** on where asbestos-containing materials can be found in the building, plant or equipment, how to work safely around them, and how to protect themselves and others from dust.

It is also important to insist that any employees of contractors working on-site have received asbestos awareness training too, if they might disturb asbestos-containing materials.

- **Have a system to investigate** any incident where accidental damage to asbestos-containing materials may have occurred, to identify its cause.

WHAT YOU SHOULD DO

- Ask your boss if they know if asbestos is present – or likely to be present – where you are working
- If it is and you cannot avoid working near it, and if you think you have or are about to damage asbestos-containing materials, then you should:
 - stop work immediately
 - move everyone away and ensure nobody enters the area
 - do not remove equipment or materials
 - close, seal or lock off the area
 - put up warning signs
 - report it to your employer

Speak to your employer if you're not sure about anything or want to get more information.

ASBESTOS INFORMATION

Asbestos removal and cleaning up after significant dust release should only be carried out by specialist asbestos contractors.

DISEASE WATCH

Exposure to asbestos dust can cause:

- Mesothelioma
- Lung cancer
- Asbestosis
- Pleural thickening

HEALTH SYMPTOMS: THE WARNING SIGNS

Identifying symptoms early can mean that treatment is more effective. Warning signs to look out for include:

- a persistent cough
- a cough you have had for a while that gets worse
- breathlessness
- coughing up phlegm with traces of blood
- an ache or pain in the chest or shoulder
- loss of appetite or unexpected weight loss
- tiredness.

Don't delay: it's better to seek medical advice sooner rather than later.

Find out more about the dangers of asbestos dust and how to stay safe at www.notimetolose.org.uk.

AROUND TWO MILLION TONNES OF CHRYSOTILE ASBESTOS ARE MINED EACH YEAR. THE BIGGEST PRODUCERS ARE RUSSIA AND CHINA.

China, Russia and India are the top asbestos consumers, together using 1.3 million tonnes each year.