



# ASBESTOS KILLS

*Over 600 deaths each year from past asbestos exposure in construction*

**A** quarter of all deaths from asbestos are maintenance workers in the construction industry.

In May this year, the HSE introduced a new regulation as part of the Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations 2002 - *the duty to manage asbestos in non-domestic premises*.

Building and maintenance contractors should no longer be unsure about when they will come across asbestos in commercial buildings, as the occupier/owner etc of the building now has an explicit duty to identify asbestos in the premises, and manage the risk.

The new duty is about managing any asbestos in a building, not about removing all asbestos!

Asbestos in good condition, and not likely to be disturbed, should not be removed. It's better to leave it in place and manage it. It won't pose a risk to health.

But if the asbestos is in poor condition, it may be best to remove it using a specialist contractor licensed by HSE.

## Asbestos - the silent killer

- breathing in asbestos dust can lead to:
  - asbestosis;
  - lung cancer;
  - mesothelioma;
- these diseases can take from 15-60 years to develop;
- there are no cures;
- these diseases are fatal.



A piece of asbestos lagging being gently shaken

### Key Fact:

***Beware - buildings constructed or renovated before the 1990s are likely to contain asbestos!***

Anyone responsible for maintenance or repair of a commercial or industrial property must now:

- **check** whether there is any asbestos present;
- **check** on its condition;
- **assess** the risks from any asbestos-containing material;
- **take action** to manage the risk so that that no-one will unknowingly disturb asbestos;
- **provide information** about the material to anyone likely to disturb it.



These are stills taken from the HSE video, *How are you managing? Dealing with the risks of asbestos in buildings*, portraying the final days of a building worker dying from mesothelioma. He was exposed to asbestos fibres in his day-to-day work without knowing it.

Award Winning Video. The first part of this hard hitting video from HSE Books graphically demonstrates the potential outcome for those unknowingly exposed to asbestos fibres in their day-to-day work.



# FOCUS ON

## The HIGH 5

### Asbestos

# Working with asbestos cement - *The good, the bad and the ugly*



the good



the good

This is an example of an asbestos cement sheet roof being removed from a large steel works using good precautions. The sheets are being systematically removed from underneath using mobile elevating work platforms.

Last November's issue of *Site safe news* listed the High 5 priority areas for site safety. Just to remind you, they are:

High 1. *The Basics: Tidy sites and decent welfare*

High 2. *Falls from height*

High 3. *Manual handling*

High 4. *Transport*

High 5. *Asbestos*



In this issue we're focusing on High 5 - Asbestos.

Many buildings in the UK contain asbestos. If you're thinking of working on a building that was built or renovated before the 1990's, you should assume that it contains asbestos until proved otherwise.

The main asbestos-containing materials (ACMs) are lagging, asbestos insulating board, sprayed insulation, decorative coatings and asbestos cement.

Before you start work, check if there are any asbestos-containing materials present. If there are ACMs in the building, find out what you need to do to work safely.

**Remember** – if you are in any doubt leave it to the experts!

Work with fibrous asbestos material, such as lagging, insulating board and coatings, almost always needs a specialist licensed asbestos contractor. You can work with asbestos cement without a licence, but you need to know how to do it correctly and safely.



the bad



the bad

*This shows how not to do it!*

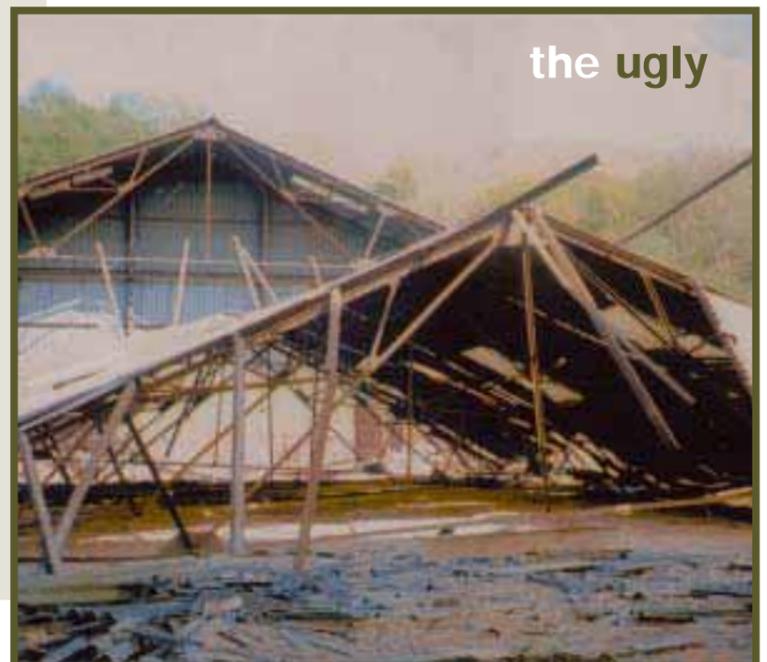
The owner of a demolition company took a shortcut to dismantle a farm building with an asbestos cement roof. He decided to cut the roof timbers with a chainsaw whilst standing on the roof! He fell 20 feet and spent 6 months in a coma as a result. He was very lucky to survive. After the accident, his family persuaded him to give up demolition work.

the ugly

The demolition of this former brickworks, which was clad in asbestos cement, resulted in the prosecution of the company concerned, because they failed to take adequate precautions. The work was badly planned and poorly controlled. Workers were unnecessarily exposed to asbestos, and asbestos contamination was spread throughout the site. The company was fined over £13 000 plus costs.



the ugly



Why not use this page of *Site safe news* as a poster to put up in your site office?



# Use the right mask - *and get it properly fitted!*



Examples of right Respiratory Protective Equipment (RPE), worn correctly



Example of wrong RPE, 'nuisance dust' mask

**A**sbestos dust gets into your body when you breathe. You can't see the finer, most harmful asbestos fibres in the air, but these can pass into the lungs where they can stay for many years. This can cause fatal diseases.

If you can't avoid disturbing asbestos cement, keep the levels as low as possible by choosing a work method that won't create dust. Wear a mask so you don't breathe in harmful fibres.

### Choose a mask that:

- is the right size and shape for your face;
- fits you properly; and
- suits your work;

and make sure you wear it correctly!

**Don't use a nuisance mask - they don't work! Use a disposable FFP3 mask to protect you.**

## Asbestos cement is fragile

- Never walk on asbestos cement.
- Don't walk on the bolts.
- Always use crawling boards, guard rails or nets underneath to prevent falls.

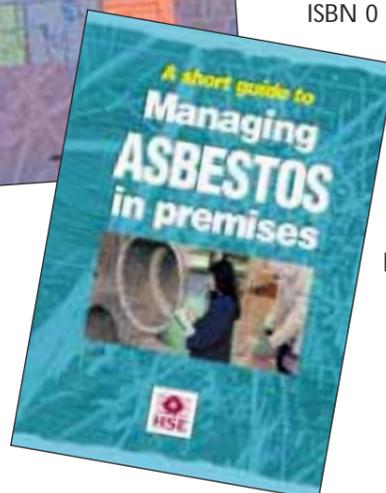
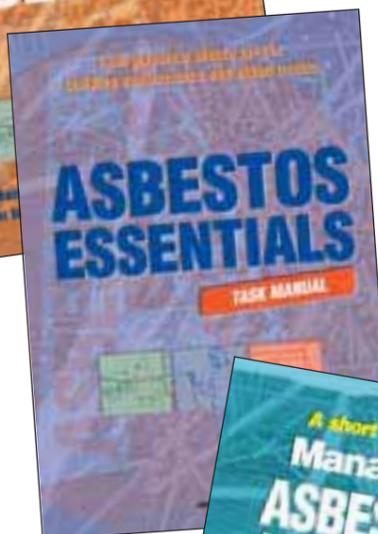
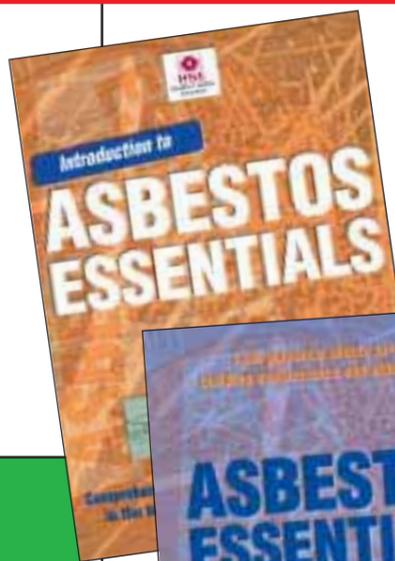
If you work with asbestos cement:

### Do:

- remove it before demolishing the building;
- avoid breaking sheets;
- keep the material damp;
- remove waste and debris promptly from site to avoid crushing; and
- dispose of the waste safely.

### Don't:

- bulldoze broken asbestos cement into piles; or
- use brushes to dry-sweep asbestos-cement debris.



## Does it contain asbestos? *How do you know?*

**B**ecause thousands of tonnes of asbestos are still present in buildings, you need to know whether any asbestos-containing materials (ACMs) have been identified before you start work.

Ask your supervisor 'Has this area been checked for asbestos?'

It's not easy to identify asbestos from its appearance, and often you can only be sure when a specialist laboratory has tested the material.

Can you tell the difference between the ACMs in the pictures below?



**Asbestos insulating board** is very dangerous material. Asbestos fibres can easily be released if it is disturbed - only specialist-licensed contractors can remove it.



**Asbestos cement** - you don't need a licence to work with it - but you do need to work safely.

**BEWARE!** You might come across hidden or dusty materials, which you suspect are asbestos, even if the area is supposed to be asbestos free. If so:

**STOP WORK;** get the material checked, preferably by an analyst.

The following priced publications are available from HSE Books:

*Introduction to asbestos essentials: Comprehensive guidance on working with asbestos in the building maintenance and allied trades* HSG213 HSE Books 2001 ISBN 0 7176 1901 X, price £12.50.

*Asbestos essentials task manual: Task guidance sheets for the building maintenance and allied trades* HSG210 HSE Books 2001

ISBN 0 7176 1887 0, price £8.50. This book contains a range of task guidance sheets for maintenance workers describing how work should be carried out, what equipment to use, and how to use it.

*A short guide to managing asbestos in premises* Leaflet INDG223(rev3) HSE Books 2002 (single copy free or priced packs of 10 ISBN 0 7176 2564 8),

# Diary

## Safety and Health Awareness Days (SHADs)

5/10/04 Trowbridge (Civic Hall)  
8/10/04 Haydock (Haydock Racecourse)  
12/10/04 North Wales (Eirias Park, Colwyn Bay)  
19/10/04 Middlesex (Kempton Park Racecourse)  
21/10/04 Cornwall (Pentewan Sands Holiday Camp)  
21/10/04 Kelso, Scotland (Union Showground)  
2-4/11/04 Glasgow (Mini events at Scotbuild)  
10/11/04 Solihull (Old Silhillians Memorial Ground)  
19/11/04 Carlisle (Carlisle Racecourse)  
TBC/2/05 York (Askham Bryan College)  
04/03/05 Aintree (Aintree racecourse)  
TBC/3/05 Oban - Fort William (venue TBC)

For more information call Tim Shambrook  
Tel: 01782 602353 E-mail: [tim.shambrook@hse.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:tim.shambrook@hse.gsi.gov.uk)

## Working at height SHAD

09/11/04 Pontefract (Parkside Hotel)

## Occupational health SHAD

TBC/2/05 Newcastle-upon-Tyne and Sheffield (venue TBC)

## Client Awareness Days

TBC/2/05 York (venue TBC)

## The Working Well Together (WWT) Roadshow visiting sites up and down the country, taking the High 5 messages to workers



HSE HQ Project Manager Steve Bailey (left), former construction worker Ian Wilkinson (front left) and Kajima Construction Manager Mark Winter (far right) with workers from the site of the new HSE HQ building, at the WWT Roadshow in Bootle



Construction workers from the site of the new HSE HQ building complete their health and safety quiz while visiting the WWT Roadshow in Bootle

# If you are in charge of the job, ask yourself these questions **BEFORE** you start work:

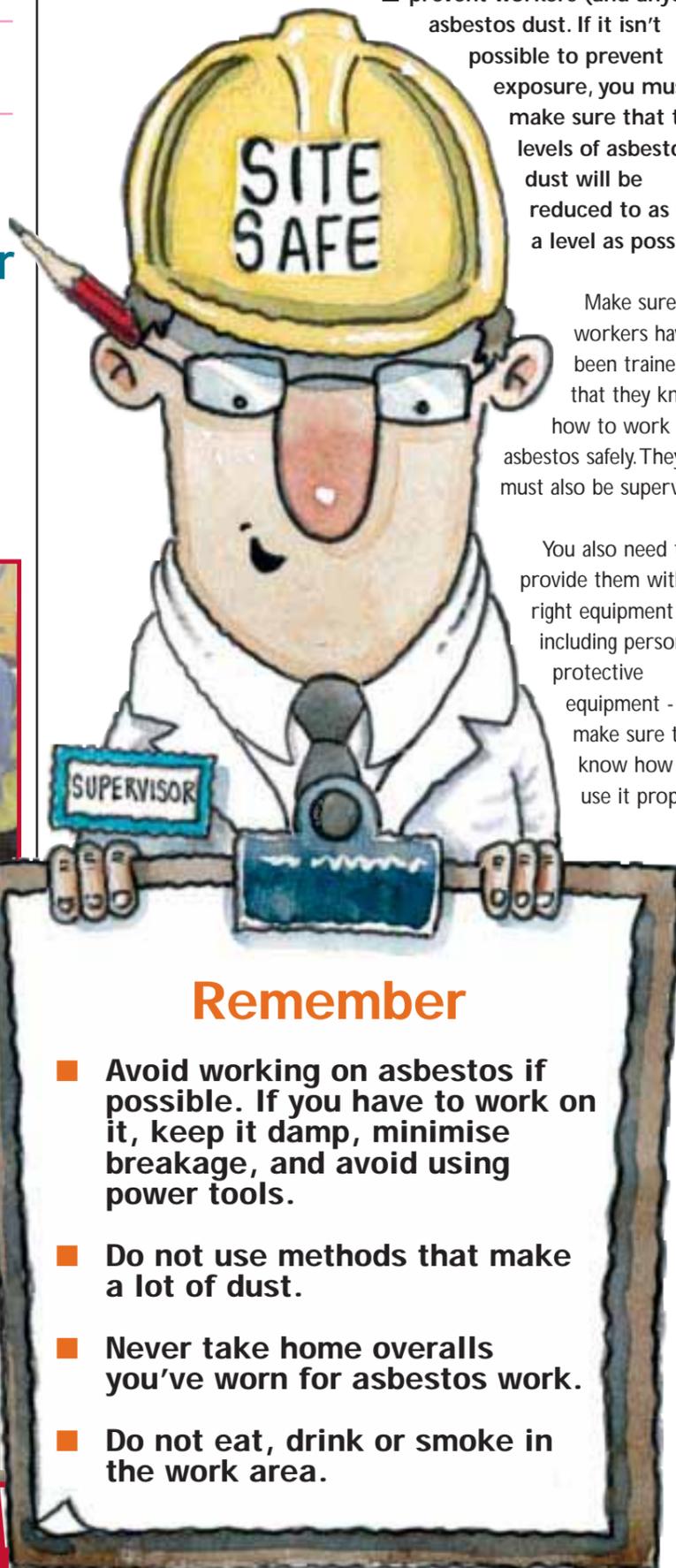
- Is there any asbestos?
- Does it have to be disturbed?
- Will the job need a specialist asbestos contractor?

If you decide that you can do the work, you will need to assess the risks, plan the work and take precautions, so that you prevent workers (and anyone else) from being exposed to asbestos dust. If it isn't

possible to prevent exposure, you must make sure that the levels of asbestos dust will be reduced to as low a level as possible.

Make sure your workers have been trained so that they know how to work with asbestos safely. They must also be supervised.

You also need to provide them with the right equipment - including personal protective equipment - and make sure they know how to use it properly.



## Remember

- Avoid working on asbestos if possible. If you have to work on it, keep it damp, minimise breakage, and avoid using power tools.
- Do not use methods that make a lot of dust.
- Never take home overalls you've worn for asbestos work.
- Do not eat, drink or smoke in the work area.

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