

Asbestos Management Policy

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Scope

This policy deals with Asbestos containing materials (ACMs) that may be found in NAS premises. It alerts employees to the risks and prescribes how managers and facilities staff must identify ACM hazards, maintain a register and assess the likelihood of exposure before undertaking, or allowing contractors to undertake work which may result in the release of fibres. It emphasises the need for managers and facilities staff to control the residual risks associated with in-situ ACMs.

Policy Summary

The purpose of this policy is to set out the organisation's policy relating to the management of ACMs. Asbestos is present in a large number of NAS buildings but is generally safe unless it is disturbed or damaged. This policy describes how managers and principals must manage the risks that asbestos may present in buildings under their control.

Introduction

The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 1999 deals with hazardous substances in general. Policy HS-0430 shows how NAS assesses risks and introduces controls for a range of hazardous substances. However, it is recognised that there is a specific risk from the inhalation of asbestos fibres. This can cause chronic respiratory diseases, e.g. asbestosis, mesothelioma and lung cancer, which often result in death. For this reason the Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations 2002 (updated and amended in 2012) were introduced. This policy is based on the requirements of these regulations and the associated approved code of practice and guidance.

Managers must take asbestos related risks seriously. The fact that exposure to the fibres does not bring about immediate ill health makes it a less obvious risk that

could easily be ignored by busy managers. It can take up to 30 to 40 years for chronic asbestos related illnesses to manifest themselves.

Asbestos was used extensively in the building industry and elsewhere for several decades up until the mid 1980s. It was used for its excellent fire retardant and insulating properties and can be found, for example, in:

- Central heating boilers and pipe-work,
- Ceiling and floor tiles,
- Cladding to columns and beams,
- Walls and panels,
- Lining to fire doors and lift doors,
- Fire stopping,
- Roofs.

Advice must be sought from the Area Facilities Manager in every situation where there is uncertainty about the management of asbestos containing materials.

Asbestos Surveys

Asbestos can be found in the most unexpected places, and materials containing asbestos can only be positively identified under the microscope. The NAS recognised the need for specialist help in the identification of asbestos in the organisation's premises and commissioned a firm of asbestos surveyors to undertake a Type 2 survey of all of the buildings in use up till the end of 2004.

Directors and managers responsible for the acquisition and operation of premises since January 2005 must ensure that Type 2 surveys are undertaken. For leased premises a copy of a recent survey undertaken by the Landlord will be sufficient. Conversely, where the NAS has conducted surveys then managers in leased premises must make a copy of the report the available to the Landlord.

A Type 2 survey will provide managers with a good idea of where asbestos may be present. Samples are taken from various elements of the building, during the survey, to determine the presence of asbestos. A Type 2 survey will not, however, show all of the locations where asbestos is present. It will only show categorically where, from the precise locations the samples were taken, asbestos is, or is not, present. It is, therefore, possible that a room with two different types of suspended ceiling tile could have asbestos in some tiles but not in others. Asbestos was often mixed with other materials and so lagging to pipe-work in the boiler room may have been found to contain no asbestos but similar looking insulation in another part of the building may actually contain asbestos, perhaps because it was repaired or installed at a different time and the contractor had decided to introduce asbestos to the mix.

Before any work is undertaken where asbestos may be present and may be disturbed, it is vital that a specialist surveyor is instructed to check that it will be safe for the work to proceed. Where it is necessary to remove asbestos then a licensed asbestos removal contractor must be employed.

The report which is produced following the survey includes a plan showing the location of any ACMs and registering the type of asbestos and the degree of risk. The report must be read by the manager responsible for the premises and any remedial actions undertaken. It must be kept and used to inform anyone who may be responsible, for example, for cutting tiles, drilling walls, altering lagged pipe-work. They must be made aware of the risks and managers must ensure that suitable precautions are taken. NAS maintenance staff and contractors must be fully informed.

Asbestos Risk Assessments

Using the information derived from the survey report(s) a risk assessment must be undertaken before any work is carried out in areas where ACMs may be present. The NAS manager must make all of the information available in the report(s) to contractors to help them with their own assessments and planning of the work.

Risk assessments must show how the risks from exposure to the release of fibres are to be controlled.

Management of Residual Risk

It is very unlikely that there will be a good case for the removal of asbestos from all premises operated by the NAS. Managers must, therefore, use the information from the survey report to enable them to monitor the condition of ACMs that remain.

The way that buildings are used can introduce risks that need to be managed. For example, service users striking wall panelling or staff pinning, stapling or tacking displays to walls. Managers need to be alert to these sorts of risks and where necessary introduce control measures.

Material that is in a good state of repair is unlikely to release fibres. Asbestos is harmless while it remains intact. However, when it becomes damaged or worn then there may be a possibility that fibres will be released. Managers must introduce a monitoring system that allows them to, routinely, check that panels, lagging, tiles, etc containing asbestos are in good order.

Key Management Actions

- Be familiar with the significant parts of the asbestos register. In particular the manager should know the location of all asbestos containing materials (ACMs) and the control measures used to keep in-situ ACMs safe.
- Consider asbestos risks before any work is undertaken that could disturb ACMs and cause the release of fibres.
- Bring to the attention of any relevant parties, the location of known asbestos.
- Carry out Type 3 surveys before work is carried out that could release fibres.
- Update asbestos registers to show accurately where ACMs may be present in the building.