

Protect yourself against
the hidden killer

Work safely if asbestos
is present



ASBESTOS



Health and Safety
Executive

Protect yourself against the hidden killer

Work safely if asbestos is present

Every week twenty tradesmen die from asbestos-related disease. If you are an electrician, plumber, heating and ventilation engineer, joiner, plasterer or work in any similar trade, you are likely to come across this hidden killer in your work – asbestos dust could kill you.

A lot of buildings **still** contain asbestos materials - anywhere built or refurbished before the year 2000 is likely to contain asbestos and it is often in places where you can't see it easily. You could be working where asbestos is present right now.



Do you know if there is asbestos where you are working?

Avoid working with asbestos if possible. If you are not sure if there are asbestos materials where you are working, don't start work. Your boss should tell you if there is asbestos present. There should be an asbestos register for workplace buildings – you can ask to see it. If asbestos is present:

Don't start work if:

- › you haven't been trained to work safely with it;
- › the asbestos materials are sprayed coatings, board or insulation and lagging on pipes and boilers – only licensed contractors should work on these. You can't work with some kinds of asbestos – they are too dangerous.

See www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos for photos and more information about licensed materials



Asbestos

Every week six joiners die from this hidden killer

the hidden killer

You may only continue to work if:

- › you have had training in asbestos work, the work has been properly planned and the right precautions are in place (eg you have the right equipment); and
- › the materials are asbestos cement, textured coatings and certain other materials (listed in *Asbestos essentials*) which do not need a licence.

If you need to stop work, seek advice from your boss or HSE.

See www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos for photos and more information about non-licensed materials





Do you know where you are likely to find asbestos?

Some common places you will find asbestos materials are:

- > ceiling tiles;
- > coating on ceilings, walls and stairwells (textured coatings);
- > sprayed coating on ducts, pipes and some ceilings;
- > boards around radiators, windows, fireplaces, building columns, pillars;
- > inside fire doors;
- > soffit boards;
- > insulation on pipes;
- > sealants on pipe joints, gaskets;
- > ropes and yarns;
- > fuse boxes;
- > electrical switchgear;
- > water tanks;
- > external cement products: roof sheets, down pipes.

Asbestos

Every week six electricians die from asbestos-related disease

the hidden killer

Work safely with asbestos

The most important thing to remember is to be prepared when you work with asbestos. You need to minimise dust and protect yourself from breathing it in. So, make sure you do the following.

- › **Use hand tools – not power tools.**
- › **Keep materials damp – not too wet.**
- › **Wear a properly fitted, suitable respirator (eg disposable FFP3 type), an ordinary dust mask will not be effective.**
- › Don't smoke, eat or drink in the work area.
- › Clean up as you go – use a special vacuum cleaner (class H), not a brush.
- › Double-bag asbestos waste, label the bags and dispose of them at an appropriate waste site.
- › Don't carry asbestos into your car or home. Wear suitable disposable overalls ('Type 5') and boots without laces or disposable boot covers. Don't take overalls home to wash. Put disposable items in asbestos waste bags and dispose of them properly.
- › When you finish work, decontaminate yourself – wipe down your overalls with a damp rag and remove them before removing your mask.





Where can I find asbestos training?

Contact the UK Asbestos Training Association (www.ukata.org.uk, Tel: 01246 824437) for a list of asbestos training providers in your area. Other training organisations may also provide asbestos training. Ask for a combination of asbestos awareness and job-specific training, usually called 'non-licensed asbestos training', that covers:

- › asbestos health risks;
- › where to find it and what it looks like;
- › safe work methods to control exposure;
- › how to use and fit a face mask;
- › how to deal with asbestos waste;
- › how to decontaminate yourself and the work area.

Asbestos

Every week twenty tradesmen die from asbestos-related disease

the hidden killer



Asbestos

**Every week three plumbers
die from this hidden killer**

the hidden killer

Find out more about working with asbestos

You can find out more by:

- › contacting HSE's Infoline (0845 345 0055);
- › looking at www.hse.gov.uk/hiddenkiller for further information or at HSE's asbestos web pages at: www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/index.htm, this includes *Asbestos essentials* task sheets and leaflets. *Asbestos essentials* gives more detailed guidance for maintenance workers doing a range of tasks with asbestos which do not need a licence;
- › contacting your trade association;
- › contacting your nearest HSE office;
- › contacting your safety representative; or
- › phoning your Local Authority Environmental Health Department (as listed in your telephone directory).

You can buy face masks and other personal protective equipment at most safety equipment supply shops. You can rent Class H vacuum cleaners from tool hire shops.



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