

Asbestos control limit review published

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has reviewed the latest international scientific, technical and workplace evidence on Great Britain's asbestos control limit.

The review followed HSE's published workplace exposure level setting process and concluded that the Great Britain (GB) asbestos control limit (CL), will remain at 0.1 fibres per millilitre (f/ml), measured as a 4-hour time-weighted average (TWA).

Undertaken in response to the European Union's (EU) decision to reduce its occupational exposure limit (OEL) for asbestos, and the 2022 Work and Pensions Committee report on 'HSE's approach to asbestos management', the review concluded that, currently, there is no clear evidence that lowering the GB CL in law would reduce current or future exposures and improve health outcomes.

HSE's Chief Scientific Advisor Professor Andrew Curran said: "Our decision is based on rigorous scientific evidence and reflects our commitment to protecting workers through the most effective means possible. The current regulatory framework, which requires exposures to be reduced as low as reasonably practicable, already provides robust protection for workers handling asbestos.

"We have thoroughly examined the available science and consulted extensively with experts across the sector, and our conclusion is that the current framework provides the most effective protection for workers.

"In addition, we found that lowering the Great Britain control limit would in practice bring most asbestos-related work into the scope of licensable activity, imposing significant costs on businesses without a corresponding reduction in exposure risk."

The review noted that there are practical difficulties of measurement at lower levels of exposure, which would provide a barrier to accurately implementing a lower limit, and could introduce risk.

The review found that most asbestos work is already designed to minimise exposure to well below the control limit through effective control measures, when requirements are followed. The review's findings stated training, competence, site discipline, and regulatory enforcement have greater influence on reducing asbestos exposure risks than changing numerical limits.

HSE will continue to monitor emerging evidence and international developments, including the EU's planned review in 2029. HSE remains committed to ensuring standards are met in practice, recognising that worker behaviour and competence are key factors in minimising asbestos exposure

risks.

Ends