

Asbestos: Young tradespeople need to know the risk

Millennials, gen Z workers and other younger people who work as plumbers, electricians, and in other trades need to take the risk of asbestos much more seriously.

That's the message from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). The workplace regulator has launched a new campaign to raise awareness of the risks associated with the dangerous substance.



The campaign, called [Asbestos and You](#), will target all tradespeople with a focus on younger workers in trades such as plastering and joinery. HSE wants to reach construction workers who started their careers after the use of asbestos was banned in 1999.

The regulator is concerned the length of time it takes for symptoms to develop after asbestos exposure could lead to a perception among today's younger workers that it is something that only impacts older people who were working before the ban.

Five thousand people a year still die from asbestos related illnesses and asbestos can still be found in buildings built or refurbished before the year 2000.

Asbestos containing materials were used extensively in the construction and maintenance of buildings in Great Britain from the 1950s until the ban. That means construction workers of all ages could still be exposed to asbestos fibres today.

HSE's chief executive Sarah Albon said: "Asbestos exposure in Great Britain is still the single greatest cause of work-related deaths. We are committed to protecting people in the workplace and reducing future work-related ill health.

"Everyone working in construction today, of any age, must take the risk from asbestos seriously.

"Asbestos is dangerous when not maintained in a safe condition or if physically disturbed without the right measures in place to avoid fibres being released into the air."

If asbestos fibres are inhaled, they can cause serious diseases such as mesothelioma, asbestos related lung cancer, asbestosis, and pleural thickening. Construction tradespeople of any age are at significant risk if they disturb materials containing asbestos during repairs and refurbishment.

HSE's head of health and work policy Mike Calcutt said: "These diseases often take a long time to develop, and it can take 20 to 30 years for symptoms to appear.

"It is crucial that all workers know how to recognise the dangers and take the right actions to protect themselves and those around them from being exposed to asbestos fibres."

Find out more about the [Asbestos and You](#) campaign, and visit HSE's website for [further guidance on asbestos](#).

Notes to editors:

1. The [Health and Safety Executive](#) (HSE) is Britain's national regulator for workplace health and safety. We prevent work-related death, injury and ill health through regulatory actions that range from influencing behaviours across whole industry sectors through to targeted interventions on individual businesses. These activities are supported by globally recognised scientific expertise.
2. More information about the [legislation](#) referred to in this case is available.
3. Further details on the latest [HSE news releases](#) is available.