

Asbestos and You

Tradespeople across Great Britain are being warned about the hidden dangers associated with asbestos.



The warning comes as part of the Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) [Asbestos and You](#) campaign targeting tradespeople about the personal risks from asbestos that still exist in properties across the country today.

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

But HSE is warning despite the ban on its use, many buildings still contain asbestos, and it is still a serious risk to anyone exposed to it at any age.

Tim Beaumont, HSE's acting head of construction policy sector, said: "Asbestos can be found in things like Artex, cement boards under eaves, garage roofs, old bath panels, boiler houses and fires and even mortar between bricks can contain asbestos.

"There is no known safe level of asbestos exposure but that's not to say it can't be managed safely.

"All tradespeople should make sure they know the basics about identifying asbestos. Before carrying out any construction work, there's a legal requirement to identify whether asbestos is present and could be disturbed.

"Younger tradespeople need to know the dangers behind asbestos as it could affect them in later life like it is affecting older tradespeople now."

Asbestos is only dangerous if not maintained in a safe condition or if physically disturbed without the right measures in place to control exposure to fibres.

Craig Evans, UKATA (United Kingdom Asbestos Training Association) Chief Operating Officer, said: "I wholeheartedly support HSE's campaign to raise asbestos awareness and the importance of training across industry.

"The dangers of asbestos are very real, with over 5,000 people in the UK dying each year from asbestos-related diseases.

"It is crucial that tradespeople are aware of the risks involved in disturbing or damaging asbestos-containing materials, as inhaling these fibres can lead to devastating diseases such as mesothelioma, lung cancer, and asbestosis.

“UKATA members are committed to providing high-quality asbestos training, delivered by highly experienced and competent professionals with extensive knowledge and expertise in their field, to help prevent unnecessary exposure and protect the health and wellbeing of all those working in the industry.”

From the 1950s until 1999, asbestos containing materials were used extensively in the construction and maintenance of buildings in Great Britain.

When materials that contain asbestos are disturbed or damaged, fibres are released into the air. If these fibres are inhaled, they can cause serious diseases such as mesothelioma, asbestos related lung cancer, asbestosis, and pleural thickening. These diseases will not affect you immediately as they often take a long time to develop, but once diagnosed, it is often too late to do anything.

It can take 20 to 30 years before symptoms appear. Symptoms include shortness of breath, persistent cough, wheezing, extreme tiredness, pain in your chest or shoulder and in more advanced cases, swollen fingertips.

If asbestos cannot be safely managed, it should be removed by a licensed asbestos contractor. Where present, asbestos should be closely managed by those responsible for the building.

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.
 4. UKATA (the United Kingdom Asbestos Training Association) is a leading association dedicated to improving the quality and standards of asbestos training, with the ultimate goal of protecting workers and the public from the risks associated with asbestos exposure. To find a UKATA approved asbestos training provider near you, visit www.ukata.org.uk or for free advice, call the team on 01246 824437.
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£1m fine for concrete firm after 'one in a million' son died at work

A concrete manufacturer has been fined £1m after a 24-year-old man died at a site in Nottingham.

Stewart Ramsay, from Mansfield, was working for Creagh Concrete Products Ltd (CCP) at its Thurgarton Lane site in Hoveringham when he suffered fatal head injuries on 15 March 2017.

Mr Ramsay, known as 'Stew', was trying to fix a problem that happened as he and colleagues were using a metal grab to unload Spantherm, a concrete building product, from some trailers. The metal grab [shouldn't have been in use.](#)

Mr Ramsay's head became trapped in the jaws of the grab after a rope connected to the locking lever snapped.



Twenty-four-year-old Stewart Ramsay died in the incident.

Even though the rope was tied in a double-knot, the locking mechanism released the jaws of the grab as Mr Ramsay pulled on it, causing fatal injuries.

Stew's mother Carol Hansford described him as a 'one in a million son'.

"I know a lot of people say that, but he really was out of this world," she said.

"He was an amazing brother, grandson, uncle and nephew.

"The hundreds of friends that came to the crematorium showed how well liked and appreciated he was – it was unbelievable.

"He was just loving, caring, thoughtful and very funny."

CCP were sentenced at Nottinghamshire Crown Court on 5 April, after they admitted failing to ensure its employees carried out lifting operations safely and without training and information being in place.

"He was such a hardworking person," Carol added.

"Not only did he work at Creagh, he also working as a doorman on weekends.

"I'll never forgot that day as long as I live.

"I got a knock at the door as his friends had come to tell me – I collapsed.

"It still doesn't seem real – it's like you're watching a film and not at the end.

"All he did was go to work.

"Things like this shouldn't happen – it destroys families forever,

"Nobody should have to go through what we have done these past six years."

An investigation by the Health and Safety executive (HSE) showed that CCP did not have a safe system of work for the use of the grab and had not carried out a risk assessment to identify risks for its use. Both the grab and a fork lift truck being used at the time were in poor condition. Neither should have been in service at the time of the incident. CCP had failed to ensure that these pieces of work equipment had been maintained in an efficient state, efficient working order or in good repair.

Creagh Concrete Products Limited of Hoveringham Nottinghamshire pleaded guilty of breaching Section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 in that it failed to ensure, so far as was reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of all its employees. The company was fined £1,000,000 and ordered to pay costs of £47,521.08.

Speaking after the hearing HSE Inspector Mr Amandip Dhanda said: "This tragic incident led to the avoidable death of a young man.

"Stewart's death could easily have been prevented if his employer had acted to identify and manage the risks involved, and to put a safe system of work in place.

"The work equipment being used at the time of the incident should not have been in use, and the employer would have known this had they effectively followed their own health and safety systems."

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[Roofer jailed after worker fell more than 16-feet to his death](#)

A man has been jailed after a worker fell from the roof of a commercial property in North London and died a week later.

Patrick McCarthy (trading as All Care Home Improvements) was given a 14-month custodial sentence after the death of Mr Andrei-Ionel Hutanu in 2019. No scaffolding or other measures had been put in place to [prevent falls from the roof](#).

Harrow Crown Court heard how 33-year-old Mr Hutanu and another man were working at the rear of commercial premises in Neasden on 19 August 2019. While his co-worker had been instructed to remove building materials from a flat roof, Mr Hutanu had been instructed to carry out repair work on a tiled pitched roof. He was working on it from a roofing ladder when he fell approximately 16-feet onto a concrete alleyway below.

He fractured his neck and sustained other serious head injuries in the fall and despite being taken by air ambulance to St Marys Hospital in Paddington, he sadly died a week later, on 26 August 2019.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) into the incident found 37-year-old McCarthy had failed to take any steps to prevent falls from height by failing to install scaffolding around the perimeter of the building or flat roof where both men were working.

Mr Patrick McCarthy (trading as All Care Home Improvements) of Pasture Road, London pleaded guilty to breaching Regulation 6(3) of the Work at Height Regulations 2005. He received a 14 -month custodial sentence at a hearing on 4 April 2023.

After the hearing, HSE Inspector Philip Jordan said: "This tragic incident could have been easily avoided. Assessing and planning work at height is essential to ensuring that suitable and sufficient measures are in place to prevent falls from height.

“The custodial sentence imposed on Mr McCarthy should underline to everyone in the construction industry that the courts, and HSE, take a failure to follow the regulations extremely seriously. HSE will not hesitate to take appropriate enforcement action against individuals or companies that fall below the required standards.”

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3. Further details on the latest [HSE news releases](#) is available.
4. HSE guidance on carrying out [roof work](#) safely and [working at height](#) is available.

[Regulator’s report on “forever chemicals” published](#)

A report published on Tuesday 4 April has set out in detail the extent to which so-called “forever chemicals” are used in Great Britain.

It has analysed how “forever chemicals” or PFAS (Poly- and perfluoroalkyl substances) are used. The report has also included exposure from everyday items such as food wrappers, cleaning products, and furniture coatings.

PFAS are pollutants that are slow to degrade. They are often called “forever chemicals” because they do not naturally breakdown and can stay in the environment for decades.

In the most comprehensive British analysis of these chemicals ever, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has identified the most common and most harmful uses of PFAS and what measures could be put in place to control and manage them.

The [HSE report](#) makes a number of recommendations including to limit the use of PFAS-containing foams used by firefighters to put out fires, as well as the use of PFAS in textiles, furniture, and cleaning products.

It has been published under UK REACH, the framework for managing the risks

from chemical substances in Great Britain. HSE, the regulator for UK REACH, has worked with the Environment Agency.

Dr Richard Daniels, director of HSE's chemicals regulation division, said: "PFAS are a global issue of concern. We have looked at responses around the world, but it was vital we gathered the right information and evidence on how PFAS are used in Britain specifically.

"This has helped us work out where the right action could be taken to limit the use of PFAS and control exposures to people and the environment in this country.

"The reality is that PFAS substances, due to their persistent properties, will continue to be detected for many years – despite measures being taken to limit restrict or ban their use.

"We will now look at the availability and risks posed by alternatives to ensure maximum long-term protections can be gained."

One of the key proposals is that, due to more comprehensive information being available, fire-fighting foams are prioritised for action. This will be founded on scoping work with stakeholders including industry, firefighters and those with expert knowledge of alternative foams. Similar exercises will take place for other commercial uses of PFAS substances.

Dr Daniels continued: "There is evidence of occupational exposure and environmental harm that can come from current fire-fighting foams, and we can understand the concerns among firefighters. We encourage all affected to work with us in the scoping exercise."

The analysis published today is a regulatory management options analysis (RMOA), a preliminary step used within the UK REACH framework. It collates, combines and analyses information to understand the nature and extent of exposure to chemical substances, in this case PFAS. The analysis considers existing laws and also how PFAS substances are being managed around the world, including Europe, Asia and the USA.

Environment Minister Rebecca Pow said: "By improving our understanding of the potential risks posed by PFAS, we will be better equipped to tackle them.

"The HSE's analysis is a key part of our efforts to protect us from these persistent chemicals – our Plan for Water recognises this and we will begin developing proposals to restrict PFAS in firefighting foams this year.

"This will build on our action to increase monitoring and support a ban or highly restrict specific PFAS both domestically and internationally, so that we can reduce the amount of PFAS entering our natural environment."

HSE, as the Agency for UK REACH, will work with the Environment Agency and the Appropriate Authorities (Defra, Scotland and Wales) to consider the recommendations and how action on these recommendations will be set out in the forthcoming UK REACH Work Programme for 2023-24.

Environment Agency executive director John Leyland said: “Today’s analysis is a significant milestone in the UK’s efforts to protect people and the environment from the potential impacts of PFAS.

“Building on actions taken since the 2000s, we are rapidly expanding our monitoring to build a clearer picture of PFAS chemicals and their potential risks.

“By working closely with our partners, we will broaden our understanding to better inform decision-making so that we can safeguard the public and our environment for future generations.”

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2. HSE is the Agency for UK REACH and therefore has responsibility for the majority of the regulatory functions under UK REACH. In the delivery of these functions, HSE is supported by and/or reportable to a number of other government organisations.
3. HSE news releases are available at: <http://press.hse.gov.uk>.
4. As part of the UK REACH Work Programme, it was agreed with the appropriate authorities for UK REACH (i.e. the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and the Scottish and Welsh Governments) that HSE and the Environment Agency would prepare an RMOA for PFAS.
5. An RMOA is not a legislative or legally binding document. It typically provides an assessment of the likely health and environmental risks associated with the use of a substance or group of substances, alongside the existing regulatory framework and any specific controls relating to them. If there is evidence of significant risks, it concludes with preliminary recommendations for any additional measures within REACH to manage them. Should action be considered appropriate, a detailed risk assessment and legislative proposal for regulatory action will follow an RMOA.
6. For the PFAS substances considered in this RMOA, the available data do not indicate a clear association with any adverse health risks. However, the long-term effects of exposure to these persistent chemicals are not well understood, and toxicological data are limited. The underlying chemistry of PFAS (strong C-F bond) contributes to their persistent nature, which in turn leads to greater potential that they could cause serious and/or irreversible damage to the environment.

Company fined after worker's leg crushed by forklift truck

A manufacturing company has been fined £600,000 after a worker's leg was crushed by a forklift truck.

The man was working for AkzoNobel Packaging Coatings Limited when the incident occurred at the firm's Birmingham site on Bordesley Green Road on 8 May 2018.

He had been walking across a pedestrian crossing at the site when a forklift truck, being driven by another worker, collided with him, crushing his leg and ankle. The driver did not slow down while approaching the pedestrian crossing and his vision was restricted as the forklift truck was carrying multiple intermediate bulk containers (IBCs).

The injured worker required surgery and skin grafts following the incident.

A Health and Safety Executive (HSE) investigation into the incident found AkzoNobel Packaging Coatings Limited failed to provide an adequate risk assessment nor a safe system of work. There was also a lack of appropriate supervision. This led to the adoption and development of an unsafe custom and practice on site.

AkzoNobel Packaging Coatings Limited, of Wexham Road, Slough, Berkshire, pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2 (1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. The company was fined £600,000 and ordered to pay costs of £3,188.60 at Birmingham Magistrates' Court on 3 April 2023.

HSE inspector Marie Wheeler said: "This incident could so easily have been avoided by the employer adequately assessing the risks and ensuring a suitable workplace transport system was implemented with correct management and supervision in place.

"Companies should be aware that HSE will not hesitate to take appropriate enforcement action against those that fall below the required standards."

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2. More about the legislation referred to in this case can be found at: www.legislation.gov.uk/
3. HSE news releases are available at <http://press.hse.gov.uk>