

Manufacturing firms reminded of their asbestos duties

Britain's workplace regulator is reminding manufacturing firms of their asbestos duties.

As we approach Global Asbestos Awareness Week (April 1 – 7), the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is reminding those running businesses occupying buildings built before 2000 to properly assess, manage and monitor asbestos risks in line with the law.

Older manufacturing facilities may house multiple asbestos containing materials (ACMs). Asbestos was widely used in buildings and in some equipment between 1950 and 1980; however, any building built or refurbished before 2000 could contain an ACM.

Asbestos can be found in: pipe lagging, insulation board, asbestos cement products such as profiled roof sheets and wall panels, floor coverings and asbestos sprayed coatings. ACMs such as gaskets and rope seals can also be found within old plant and equipment such as industrial ovens and pipework.

Asbestos exposures caused by poor planning and risk management can have substantial human costs for victims and their families. Asbestos-related diseases remain the highest cause of work-related deaths in Great Britain, these often fatal diseases, typically take decades for symptoms to occur following exposure.

There is a [legal duty to manage asbestos](#) and failing to do so can result in penalties ranging from fines to prison sentences. The implications of an asbestos incident can also be far reaching in terms of reputation, staff morale, attracting new staff and overall costs.

HSE data reveals there have been more than 100 asbestos-related prosecution cases brought in the past five years, relating to 150 breaches of the law.

Make UK, supporting the manufacturing sector and businesses around the country is supporting HSE's call. Chris Newson CFIOSH, Environment Health and Safety Director, said he was happy Make UK was fully behind the HSE's "[Asbestos – Your Duty](#)" campaign.

"The number of people affected each year by this deadly material within UK manufacturing is still far higher than it need be," he said.

"It is important that all dutyholders within our sector are aware of their duties and the excellent resources made freely available by HSE to help them meet their legal requirements."

The risks associated with asbestos-containing materials are well known and free advice and resources are available from the [HSE's website](#).

As the regulator's campaign continues, HSE Head of Manufacturing Sector, David Butter reminded those responsible that asbestos wasn't just a problem of the past.

"It can still be found in a wide variety of materials in factories and manufacturing premises," they said.

"Dutyholders must identify, assess and manage asbestos in their buildings to keep people safe."

There are six steps for how those responsible can comply with their legal duty:

1. Find out if asbestos could be present in your building.
1. Arrange an asbestos survey by a competent person or accredited surveyor.
1. Make a register and assess the risks from your asbestos.
1. Write your asbestos management plan.
1. Put your plan into action.
1. Continually monitor and communicate the plan.

David went on to say: "Employers should not undertake any work with asbestos materials, which exposes their employees, unless the risks have been assessed and appropriate control measures have been implemented.

"Some types of work associated with asbestos materials may only be undertaken by a suitably licensed asbestos contractor under stringent procedures.

"As well as being a legal duty, it is simply common sense and good business to ensure rigorous managing and monitoring of asbestos."

Further information:

For further information on asbestos-related disease statistics visit:
[Asbestosis, mesothelioma, asbestos related lung cancer and non-malignant pleural disease in Great Britain 2024](#)