

# News story: Sea king helicopters, asbestos

Serving personnel, veterans, former MOD civilian personnel and contractors may have seen media reports about asbestos being found in some sea king helicopters. The MOD has undertaken an investigation and people that may have had an association with the sea king might find the following information useful in considering the possible risk of exposure:

## **Asbestos in sea king**

- the sea king first entered service in 1969 and the final aircraft were retired from the active inventory on 30 September 2018
- historically, asbestos containing material was used where resistance to heat or an insulating property was required. In the sea king this was principally in gaskets and seals located around the engines, gearboxes, heating and ventilation systems. These areas were exposed to routine maintenance activity
- following investigation, to the best of our knowledge, Chrysotile (white) asbestos is the only asbestos type that was used
- as a consequence of the Departmental Directive on Asbestos Elimination (c.1999), an asbestos elimination plan for sea king was implemented. By 2006, major components had been replaced and remaining items were assessed as low risk and contained inside components that were not routinely disassembled. These were replaced with asbestos free alternatives when routine maintenance allowed
- earlier this year, a routine maintenance training activity being conducted on a retired sea king airframe revealed the presence of asbestos within an exhaust panel seal. Subsequent investigation identified that the MOD's supply chain had not been purged of asbestos components and thus the risk remained that asbestos-containing components could still be fitted to sea king aircraft. Action has been taken to remove these components from the supply chain

## **Asbestos use and health risks**

- asbestos is fire resistant and was widely used in the 20th century as an insulating material in boilers, pipework etc and notably in building construction
- asbestos exposure can relate to occupation, but there are many other sources in the environment
- contact with asbestos does not produce acute symptoms but over time, typically many years, a variety of chest conditions may develop, dependent on the type of asbestos, and the level and duration of exposure
- information about medical conditions related to asbestos exposure can be found on the NHS website at <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/asbestosis/> and <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/mesothelioma/>

## Reporting

- if you are a veteran or former civilian employee and you consider that you may have been exposed to asbestos on sea king helicopters you may wish to complete and return a [MOD Form 960 Asbestos – Personal Record Annotation](#). This form is self certifying
- you should retain one copy, you may wish to pass one copy to your general practitioner, and one copy should be returned to the MOD to be placed on your personal file. The completed form should be returned to:

Defence Business Services Secretariat  
Abbey Wood North  
Oak West 1  
Room NH5  
Fox Den Road  
Bristol  
BS34 0QW

- serving members of the armed forces and current civil servants, who are concerned about possible exposure, should follow the instructions in 2018DIN06-025 and complete an [MOD Form 960 – Personnel Record Annotation](#) and pass the form to the local service medical officer (for service personnel – hardcopy) or DBS HR (Civilian personnel – electronic copy).

## Compensation

- the War Disablement Pension and the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme both make provision for any illness or injury caused by service in HM Armed Forces. Awards are not made for exposure, but for an injury or disorder including asbestos related conditions
- further details on how to make a claim under the War Pensions Scheme, and regarding the conditions and applicable dates, are available via the [Veterans UK War Pensions page](#)
- welfare support for veterans, including home visits where needed, is also available from the [MOD's Veterans Welfare Service](#)
- the Civil Service Injury Benefit Scheme (CSIBS) provides compensation to civil servants who suffer a qualifying injury while on duty which reduces their earnings capacity. The CSIBS covers all civil servants, including employees who are not part of the Civil Service Pension arrangements.
- should you wish to pursue a common law claim for damages, regardless of whether you are serving or former service personnel, civil servant, civilian contractor or other person not employed by the department, you may wish to seek legal advice on the merits of such a claim