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**AUTHORISATION: Signature****Date**

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**Purpose and Scope**

To ensure that all staff are aware of the hazards and risks that are associated with Asbestos in the workplace and that may well be faced with during the course of their working activities.

**Properties of Asbestos**

There are several different types of Asbestos. The most common types that you may come in contact with include Chrysotile (White), Crocidolite (Blue) and Amosite (Brown)

Asbestos fibres differ in their mechanical and chemical properties and can be found on their own or as a mixture. They are not usually identifiable by their colour alone. The colour of asbestos can easily change if affected by heat, chemicals or is combined with other substances.

Blue and brown asbestos were banned in 1985, and white asbestos followed in 1999 (there were some limited exceptions for the specialist use of white asbestos, however a total ban came on 01/01/2005).

Work with ACMs can release asbestos fibres into the air. Although the body will get rid of most of the larger fibres that can enter the nose and mouth, tiny fibres can pass into the lower parts of the lung. They can stay there for years and in some cases work their way through the lung lining. The body naturally gets rid of any asbestos fibres that you might take in with food and water and asbestos fibres cannot be absorbed through your skin.

**Health Effects**

Inhalation of asbestos fibres can lead to a number of fatal diseases/conditions including Pleural Plaques, Diffuse Pleural Thickening, Asbestosis, Lung Cancer, Mesothelioma and more general Cancers elsewhere in the body.

Inhalation of asbestos fibres can also lead to an increased risk of developing lung cancer. Smoking can increase this risk further.

There are no known cures for asbestos-related diseases and they will generally appear many years after first exposure. This latent period can vary between 15 and 60 years. The symptoms may include shortness of breath, a cough, blood in any fluid or mucus coughed up from the lungs, chest pain, abdominal pain, difficulty in swallowing, prolonged hoarseness, significant weight loss

If the ACMs are intact and in a position where they cannot easily be damaged, they pose little risk to health through fibres being released into the air.

**Asbestos Containing Materials**

Although asbestos usage has been banned it is still to be found in many older buildings particularly if it was built or refurbished between 1950 and 1980 and particularly if it had a steel frame and boilers with thermal insulation. Information on the presence of ACMs should be established before any work commences.

Some ACMs are more vulnerable to damage and more likely to release fibres than others. In general, the materials which contain a high percentage of asbestos are more easily damaged. The list below is roughly in order of ease of fibre release (with the highest potential fibre release first).

- Sprayed coatings, lagging and insulating board are more likely to contain blue or brown asbestos.
- Asbestos insulation and lagging can contain up to 85% asbestos and are most likely to give off fibres.
- Work with asbestos insulating board can result in equally high fibre release if power tools are used.

- Asbestos cement contains only 10%-15% asbestos and the asbestos is tightly bound into the cement and the material will only give off fibres if it is badly damaged or broken.

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**Where Are ACMs most Likely to be Found?**

They are most likely to be found

- sprayed asbestos and asbestos loose packing - generally used as fire breaks in ceiling voids;
- moulded or preformed lagging - generally used in thermal insulation of pipes and boilers;
- sprayed asbestos - generally used as fire protection in ducts, firebreaks, panels, partitions, soffit boards, ceiling panels and around structural steel work;
- insulating boards used for fire protection, thermal insulation, partitioning and ducts;
- some ceiling tiles;
- millboard, paper and paper products used for insulation of electrical equipment. Asbestos paper has also been used as a fire-proof facing on wood fibreboard;
- asbestos cement products, which can be fully or semi-compressed into flat or corrugated sheets. Corrugated sheets are largely used as roofing and wall cladding. Other asbestos cement products include gutters, rainwater pipes and water tanks;
- certain textured coatings;
- bitumen roofing material; and
- vinyl or thermoplastic floor tiles.

In addition, asbestos was used in many other materials.

**If you are in any doubt, presume that the material does contain asbestos and alert your supervisor.**

**Asbestos Emergency Procedure**

Should there be an unexpected or inadvertent release of Asbestos fibres into the workplace air then the following emergency procedures need to be adopted to limit exposure and the risks to health..

1. Stop work immediately
2. Keep everyone else out of the work area
3. Ensure that the problem is reported to the person in charge as soon as possible
4. Remove the clothing and put it into a plastic bag and seal (Bag to be disposed of at later time)
5. Try to wash thoroughly straight away or if the facilities are provided take a shower
6. Leave the washing facilities clean
7. Put up a warning sign 'possible asbestos contamination'
8. Identify the cause of the uncontrolled release as quickly as possible and implement adequate control measures as fast as possible..

**Avoiding Risks from Asbestos**

Prior to any work on site commencing the client / building occupier must be asked for a copy of their Asbestos Register. Where this is available the works must be planned to take account of the presence of any ACMs.

If an asbestos register is not available then a risk assessment needs to be undertaken to determine whether there is likely to be any risk of exposure to ACMs during the works to be carried out on site. If in any doubt it should be assumed that ACMs may be present and a specialist called in to sample and test any suspect materials or any materials that may be disturbed during the works.

All exposures to asbestos should be avoided. If however, you are accidentally exposed to asbestos report this immediately to your supervisor

**If in any doubt Stop Work, Secure the Area and Notify your Supervisor**

