

## ABClean Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

1. *How can I recognize asbestos containing products during cleaning, renovation, demolition or dismantling task? Considering construction date, which buildings may I find asbestos in?*

All business premises should have a register of asbestos locations, etc – check before starting work.

Extreme caution is needed when working on buildings from the late 1950's through to the 1980's.

It is unlikely asbestos will be found in buildings constructed since 2000

*Residential, Industrial & Commercial* property may have

- inside:
- sprayed asbestos coatings on ceilings, walls, beams and columns
  - asbestos cement water tanks
  - loose fill insulation
  - lagging & insulation board around boilers & pipework
  - rope seals, gaskets, paper on boilers, etc
  - insulation board ceiling tiles, partition walls, fire doors
  - textured decorative coatings on ceilings
  - vinyl floor tiles
- outside:
- cement roofs, gutters, downpipes, soffits, roofing tiles
  - flue and chimney pipes
  - pre-fabricated houses, storage and industrial buildings can have walls and roofs containing asbestos
  - linoleum flooring
  - vinyl floor tiles

*Residential property* may also have:

- inside:
- bath panels, toilet seats and water cisterns
  - fuse box mountings
  - fire proof doors
  - airing cupboard insulation
  - fire surrounds, and hearths
  - window panels/ decorative panels in windows
  - fire proof linings in in ceilings and walls of garages
  - insulation of electrical wiring
  - linoleum flooring
  - vinyl floor tiles
- outside:
- roofing felt
  - asbestos cement roofs
  - roofing tiles

- Asbestos cement sheets are **not** load bearing – **do not step upon**
- It is unlikely to find asbestos in buildings that were constructed after 2000

**2. *When I conduct cleaning, renovation, demolition or dismantling tasks, which specific activities make it more likely to release asbestos fibres?***

Sanding, grinding and cutting produce high levels of dust and materials should be damped down before working; use correct protective clothing and PPE if the products in question may contain asbestos.

**3. *Is it dangerous to cut, break or otherwise disturb asbestos containing products?***

Cutting breaking and otherwise disturbing asbestos containing products releases large amounts of asbestos fibres into the air making it extremely dangerous. This should be avoided and only be conducted by professional asbestos removal companies under the appropriate safety precautions.

Sanding, grinding and cutting produce high levels of dust and materials should be pre-coated, damped down, and/or loosened with drawing fasteners before working; use correct protective clothing and PPE.

Tooling should be fitted with dust collection systems. Always use appropriate protective clothing and personal protective equipment. Afterwards clean up and decontaminate work site properly, and dispose of asbestos containing waste in sealed containers at approved waste disposal sites for hazardous waste.

Work should be planned so that any asbestos based material is removed with the least possible disturbance, preferably intact.

**4. *How is exposure to asbestos dangerous to my health and that of others including my family? Is it dangerous to touch, handle, or breathe in? Is it dangerous to eat, drink or smoke around asbestos?***

Breathing and ingesting asbestos dust and fibre will cause asbestos related disease. A major cause of asbestos related disease to non-workers is “carry-home” issues. Work clothes, etc. should be disposed of on site and taken to approved waste disposal sites. Disposable clothing is preferable and any laundering should be done by specialist cleaners using appropriate filtering systems for waste water. Never take clothes home and never use a domestic washing machine.

Those workers found to be suffering from asbestos related diseases should avoid smoking - reliable studies show those exposed to asbestos, suffering asbestos related disease and smoking have double the risk of getting the fatal mesothelioma cancer.

**5. *How should I respond, who should I inform if I encounter asbestos during my work, or if I have the suspicion to have found it? Who can remove asbestos?***

Stop work immediately, advise supervisors who should seek professional advice and arrange for an analysis of suspect materials. Removal or encapsulation of asbestos should always be done by specialised companies with the necessary training and safety equipment.

**6. *Is there a safe way to distinguish asbestos containing products from safe products?***

Products and material known to contain asbestos recognised in surveys should have precautionary labelling and signing. It can be very difficult to recognise asbestos visually. Asbestos is often mixed with other materials making detection difficult, for example asbestos cement products may contain 5% - 20% asbestos mixed with cement.

Even experienced workers will find it difficult to recognise asbestos visually.

**7. *Once asbestos has been identified, which activities can be carried out safely? In which cases should I request services from an external company specialized in asbestos handling and removal?***

Removing loose fill insulation; ceiling tiles; sprayed coatings; pipe lagging, etc and debris or materials when clearing up from fire, flood, or water leakage should always be handled by licensed specialist contractors.

Work may be carried out safely around asbestos if the asbestos containing products are sealed, remain intact, and are not disturbed during the work process.

**8. *What kind of safety equipment is necessary to work with asbestos? Who is responsible for providing it?***

Use appropriate disposable equipment. Overalls, fitted facemasks and respiratory equipment should be “asbestos fibre and dust proof”

All work safety clothing and equipment should be provided by employers.

**9. *What is my responsibility as a worker? As a supervisor? As an employer? What are my functions as an Asbestos Awareness Officer?***

The employer must guarantee that employees are not in danger while working and the employer has obligation to minimize the hazards of asbestos and develop a safe work plan.

Asbestos Awareness Officers should be involved at the onset and assure that workers receive asbestos awareness and safety training before the work starts, make sure that the safe work plan is implemented and assure the safety of workers on site. The Asbestos Awareness Officer does not replace existing structures such as OSH-representatives and is responsible for working in accordance with established institutions such as OSH-representatives, works councils, and other workers’ representatives or local trade union representatives.

Workers must report any hazards or risks they have discovered

If work causes serious danger to the life or health of the employee involved or any other employees, the employee has the right to refuse such work.

**10. *How should asbestos containing waste be handled?***

Covering work areas with plastic sheet will make cleaning up easier. Clean up as you work – don’t let waste accumulate in the work place.

Tools and surfaces should damp wiped to remove dust and fibre.

All waste, including work clothes, should be double-bagged; sealed with tape and labelled. Dispose as hazardous waste at a licensed waste site. Large quantities would be better stored and taken to waste disposal sites in sealed containers.

**11. Which public authorities are responsible for workers' protection from asbestos? Who should I contact to get information on relevant legislation, rights and obligations?**

Depending on the country local, regional, or national labour inspectorate or occupational safety and health authorities, your trade union can provide you with the relevant information.

In Finland for example the employer must guarantee that employees are not in danger while working and the employer has obligation to minimize the hazards of asbestos.

The employer must tell by the reporting employee and the OSH representative what measures have been taken or will be taken in the matter for example when finding asbestos in a building. If you find asbestos in your working site – stop working. In Finland for example if work causes serious danger to the life or health of the employee involved or any other employees, the employee has the right to refuse such work.

Employees are required by both the Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSH Act) and the Employment Contracts Act to report any hazards or risks they have discovered in working conditions. The OSH Act also places on employees a duty to immediately remedy, where possible, such faults and defects they have noticed which cause evident danger.

And the first step is to contact your local Construction Union representative. He/ She will tell you what to do next and helps you with the contacts to public authorities. For example in Finland you could contact the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. The OSH Inspectors are giving information about rights and legislation and inspectors are making reports to police authorities.

**12. If I believe that I might be at risk of contracting an asbestos related disease, what are my obligations concerning medical treatment and compensation?**

This may vary from country to country, but it is good practice for asbestos exposed workers to record their work history with their medical practitioner, and with their trades union and their legal advisers so that if they suffer asbestos related disease in the future the origin might be recognized.

A decades-long delay occurs between exposure to asbestos and appearance of the resulting diseases. In the case of asbestos, causality is determined based on the extent and length of the exposure and the type of disease.

Employment history must be clarified. If it is suspected that the symptoms are due to previous exposure, a discussion on the issue must be held with the medical practice handling the case. The doctor will evaluate the amount of exposure involved and perform the examinations necessary to identifying the probable cause of the symptoms. If the doctor suspects that an occupational disease is in question, he or she will draw up medical certificate for an insurance company. This certificate will be sent to the insurance company engaged by workplace in which the worker was most recently exposed to asbestos.

People who have been exposed to asbestos must organize their own follow-ups. It is important that people ensure that they know how to manage the monitoring of their own condition. It is

recommended that occupational healthcare services advise people who have been exposed to asbestos and provide care providers with written follow-up instructions. Frequency of monitoring depends on the type of exposure and disease in question.

Periodic post-occupational check-ups on asbestos exposure are arranged in accordance with a doctor's examination and directions.

Clarify whether the disease can be compensated for as an occupational disease (occupational exposure to asbestos). Ensure that an adequate medical examination is performed and a precise exposure report is drawn up, for example in a university hospital or for example in Finland by the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health, in order to confirm

Whether an occupational disease is in question. Deliver the electronic medical certificate And employment history report to the insurance company. The decision made on this matter by the insurance company is subject to a right of appeal.

Compensation from insurance. Once the decision has been issued, the insurance company can be contacted if you require further information. The decision is also open to a right of appeal. Instructions on drawing up an appeal will be provided as an attachment to the decision. If necessary, you can also contact your trade union or shop steward. Compensation for asbestos-induced diseases is paid in accordance for example in Finland with the Employment Accidents Insurance Act. In some cases, additional compensation may be applied for on the basis of other laws.

According to the Employment Accidents Insurance Act, health care and examination fees, rehabilitation, daily allowance, handicap allowance, accident pension as well as survivor's pension and funeral allowance are payable as compensation. Health care costs, with no limit in time or value, are paid while the need for treatment remains. Loss of earnings can be reimbursed as daily allowance for a year from the manifestation of the occupational disease. Following this, loss of earnings can be reimbursed in the form of an accident pension. However, the worker in question is often retired when the symptoms of an asbestos-induced occupational disease first appear.

### **13. *Where can I find more information, guidance?***

Depending on the country local, regional, or national labour inspectorate or occupational safety and health authority, advice can be found through trade union who can also help to contact the relevant authority. The European Work Hazards Network ([www.ewhn.eu/links](http://www.ewhn.eu/links)) can also be a source of information and has groups in a number of countries.

Other resources include workers health and safety advice centres - UK Hazards Campaign ([www.hazardscampaign.org.uk](http://www.hazardscampaign.org.uk)) Hazards Magazine has resources for asbestos awareness, and world-wide news coverage of asbestos issues ([www.hazards.org/asbestos/index.htm](http://www.hazards.org/asbestos/index.htm)). Similarly the International Ban Asbestos Secretariat (IBAS) website is "the" news, knowledge base ([www.ibasecretariat.org](http://www.ibasecretariat.org)).

A network of asbestos victim support groups exists in the UK, largely volunteers campaigning and giving advice. ([www.asbestosforum.org.uk](http://www.asbestosforum.org.uk)) Specialist occup'l safety & health departments in academic institutions.

Bodies such as the UK British Royal Society for Protection from Accidents (RoSPA); British Safety Council. It should be remembered such organisations are "subscriber bodies" serving their affiliates and trades union are rarely affiliated. In the UK specialist advice, especially for those suffering illness can be obtained from the British Lung Foundation, and the McMillan Cancer organisation.