



Introduction

- There are three main types of asbestos – chrysotile, amosite and crocidolite; they are usually called white, brown and blue asbestos respectively. However, they cannot be identified just by their colour;
- Blue and brown asbestos (the two most dangerous forms) have not been imported into the UK for nearly 20 years and their use was banned in 1985. White asbestos was banned (except for a small number of specialised uses) in 1999;

- Working with asbestos can release small fibres into the air. Breathing in these fibres can eventually lead to a number of fatal diseases. These include:
- Asbestosis or fibrosis (scarring) of the lungs;
- Lung cancer; and
- Mesothelioma, a cancer of the inner lining of the chest wall or abdominal cavity.

There is no cure for asbestos-related diseases.

Information

- You must NOT at any time, work with or remove asbestos insulation, asbestos coating or asbestos insulation boards. This includes drilling, cutting or abrading them;
- 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. Asbestos fibres cannot be absorbed through your skin;
- Asbestos is likely to be in a building if:
 - It was built or refurbished between 1950 and 1980 and particularly;
 - If it also has a steel frame; and/or
 - It has boilers with thermal insulation.
- But you also need to bear in mind that

asbestos cement has also been widely used as a building material since the 1950s;

- Many thousands of tonnes of asbestos were used in buildings in the past. Much of this is still there and you cannot easily identify it from its appearance;
- Any asbestos-containing materials on site should have been identified before work starts (by the client). Working with asbestos insulation, asbestos coatings and asbestos insulating board must normally be carried out by an HSE-licensed contractor. Before you start work ask the building manager or your supervisor 'Has the site been checked for asbestos?'
- If you come across any hidden or dusty materials which you suspect may contain asbestos, stop work and get advice. Identification of asbestos-containing materials is not easy and you can only be sure they are asbestos if they have been tested by a specialist laboratory.



Steelwork coated with asbestos spray for fire protection.



A ceiling coated with asbestos spray, which has been damaged by building work.

Conclusion

- Find out if Asbestos is present in the building and where it is from the client;
- Be wary of disturbing ceilings, wall cavities and other common Asbestos containing areas, try and keep dusts to a minimum;
- If any areas are marked as containing asbestos, DO NOT enter, until permission has been granted by the contract manager/supervisor and/or the client.

NOTE: If you have any questions regarding this information please contact your line manager; alternatively you can contact your regional health, safety & environmental manager.