NEWS Update

Safegard

MARCH 2010

Asbestos safety

The inhalation of asbestos fibres can lead to a variety of conditions linked to the deaths of over 1,000 people per year. If you are responsible for managing the maintenance and repair of a building, you have a legal duty as the 'duty holder' under the Control of Asbestos Regulations 2006 to manage any asbestos in it. Equally if you are undertaking any maintenance type activities you must determine whether the presence of asbestos necessitates putting in additional controls. Everyone has their part to play in ensuring safety and compliance.

Asbestos is a naturally occurring fibrous material that has been widely used in the building industry since around the 1950's. The use of some types of asbestos was banned in the 1980's and there has been a total ban in its use since 1999.

Failure to manage asbestos in existing buildings may lead to the release of asbestos fibres into the atmosphere. Workers who carry out building maintenance and repairs are particularly at risk. It is estimated that up to half a million commercial buildings still contain asbestos. Implementing the actions described below will help to minimise the risk of you and others becoming exposed to this hazardous substance.

If asbestos is in good condition and there is no risk of it being disturbed or damaged the risk is minimal. If however it is disturbed or damaged, fibres can be released causing a significant health hazard.

Who is most likely to disturb asbestos?

Workers who carry out maintenance and repair jobs such as cutting or drilling into walls or floors, ceilings or partitions; repairing boilers; laying cables, etc. Such workers include:

- construction and demolition contractors, roofers, electricians, painters and decorators, joiners, plumbers, gas fitters, plasterers, shop fitters, heating and ventilation engineers, and surveyors;
- electronics: phone and information technology engineers, alarm installers;
- general maintenance engineers and others who work on the fabric of a building.

Asbestos containing materials (ACMs) may be found in the following places

- Sprayed asbestos and asbestos loose packing - generally used as fire breaks in ceiling voids;
- Moulded or pre-formed lagging - generally used in thermal insulation of pipes and boilers;
- Sprayed asbestos - generally used as fire protection in ducts, fire breaks, 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 the insulation of electrical equipment. Asbestos paper has also been used as a fire-proof facing on wood and fibreboard;
- Asbestos containing cement products compressed into flat or corrugated sheets often used as roofing or wall cladding. Other asbestos cement products include gutters, rainwater pipes and water tanks;
- Some textured coatings (e.g. artex)
- Bitumen roofing material; and
- Vinyl or thermoplastic floor tiles.

Steps to managing asbestos in buildings

The duty holder has a responsibility to:

- Identify all materials that may contain asbestos e.g. insulation board, ceiling tiles including areas normally not visited e.g. roof voids, storerooms, etc.
- Complete a written record or register which provides information on the location and condition of the asbestos containing material (ACM). From this record a priority action plan should be put in place (this is often prepared by a qualified and competent person, i.e. external consultants will be brought in).
- Inform people where the asbestos is, especially those who are liable to work on it or disturb it
- Keep the records up to date. This should include periodic inspections of asbestos containing materials to monitor their condition.

The Health & Safety Executive have been running their 'Hidden Killer' campaign to highlight the dangers of asbestos for which they have recently been awarded a European Excellence Award. For further information, visit their website at www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/hiddenkiller/index.htm

Guidelines published for sentencing in corporate manslaughter cases

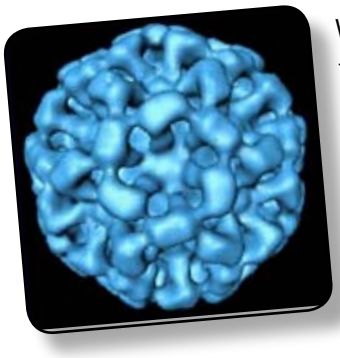
Following its consultation process, the Sentencing Guidelines Council, who are charged by parliament to issue sentencing guidelines for courts in England and Wales, have published its advice for corporate manslaughter and health and safety offences where a death has occurred.

The guidelines apply to organisations rather than individuals and the prosecution must have shown that there had been a serious failure in procedures that resulted in the death. The guidelines set a starting point for fines so that in cases of corporate manslaughter, the fine will start at £500,000 and may reach many millions. In the case of a health and safety offence causing death, the tariff will normally start at £100,000 and may reach several hundred thousands of pounds.

When considering the sentencing the seriousness of the offence will be taken into account, for example whether it was an isolated incident or a systematic departure from good practice and whether there had been a failure to respond to previous 'near misses'. As a result, higher fines for offences causing death may be expected than have previously been the case.

The court can also impose publicity orders when sentencing for corporate manslaughter. This is to ensure that the conviction becomes known to shareholders, public bodies and local people.

Controlling seasonal infections such as Norovirus



Winter is associated with a seasonal increase of common infections, especially those causing diarrhoea, vomiting, colds and flu. The media has recently reported how several hospitals have had to take additional measures, such as closing non urgent wards, to prevent the spread of norovirus. The elderly and young people are most at risk of contracting the Norovirus.

Norovirus, which causes winter vomiting, is a small round structured virus (SRSV) and is highly infectious and can spread rapidly in places where people are in close contact with each other, such as schools and nursing homes. It takes less than 100 viral particles to cause illness and is generally spread via the faecal-oral route; it may also be spread through aerosols and contact with infected surfaces. Spread is prevented by Good Hygiene Practice, particularly hand washing and regular surface cleaning and disinfection.

Food handlers can also spread the infection through their work and therefore, if a food hander is suffering or suspected from suffering from Norovirus they must be excluded from site immediately until they have been 48 hours symptom free.

In addition, it is recommended best practice that if a food handler has been in close contact with someone suspected or infected with Norovirus they must also be excluded from site immediately. If symptoms develop they must not return until they have been symptom free for at least 48 hours. If symptoms do not develop, they may return to work after 24 hours since last contact with the infected person.

Special cleaning procedures are required where the disease is suspected; particularly in boarding schools, other educational and healthcare units. The tips below will assist in preventing the spread of the infection.

Cleaning products - Use a disinfectant cleaner that has been tested and shown to be effective against the virus such as Ecolab Desguard 20 or Oasis Pro 20. It may be necessary to use at a higher concentration than for routine cleaning to be effective so you will need to refer to the manufacturer's instructions.

Keep **cleaning equipmen**t to a minimum and after use place disposable equipment in a sealed bag to dispose of as infected waste. Disinfect reusable equipment after use to prevent spread of the virus.

Personal Protective Equipment – Use disposable gloves, aprons, goggles and/or face masks. When handling faeces or vomit wear tightly fitting half face masks (EN149 to remove particles). If not available paper masks will provide some protection against aerosols.

Hard surfaces, e.g. floors, bathroom fittings, bed frames.

- Use Spill Kit granules to remove vomit, etc.
- Spray with disinfectant solution, e.g. 3% solution of Desguard 20 through a foaming trigger spray.
- Leave in contact for 5 minutes to allow disinfection to work.
- Rinse off and dry.
- Dispose of all soiled materials carefully as infected waste

Carpets

- Use Spill Kit granules to remove vomit, etc.
- Spray with disinfectant solution, e.g. 3% solution of Desguard 20 through a foaming trigger spray.
- Leave in contact for 5 minutes to allow disinfection to work.
- Rinse off and dry.
- Use a carpet spotter to clean the affected carpet
- Use Odor-ex on affected area to remove odours if necessary
- Dispose of all soiled materials as infected waste

Cutlery/crockery - Ideally use disposable cutlery and crockery for infected people. Transport to the dishwasher in a sealed marked container and handle it with disposable gloves when loading it into the dishwasher. Ensure that the dishwasher has a disinfecting wash cycle, i.e. a hot rinse above 82°C.

Linen and personal laundry Transport to the laundry room in a sealed marked container. Wear PPE when handling infected laundry. Wash in automatic machine on a hot wash to ensure disinfection.

Procedure on entering and leaving patient's rooms

- Put on PPE before entering patient's room to undertake cleaning.
- Remove PPE after cleaning has been completed and before leaving patient's room.
- Put used PPE into sealed container for disposal as infected waste.
- Wash hands thoroughly upon completion of cleaning tasks.

Planning school trips

The value of education outside the classroom is undoubtedly well known in supporting the academic achievements of students and developing them in the wider sense with social skills. However, school trips are not without risk and therefore, must be planned to ensure that risks are minimised and alternative arrangements are in place if the main activity cannot take place.

All those involved from the governors and head teachers to the leaders, helpers, parents and students should be involved in the planning and be confident that the ten key points below are covered.

1. What are the main objectives of the visit?
2. What is "Plan B" if the main objectives can't be achieved?
3. What could go wrong? Does the risk assessment cover the following?

- The main activity
- "Plan B"
- Travel arrangements
- Emergency procedures
- Staff numbers, gender and skill mixes
- Generic and site-specific hazards and risks (including for Plan B)
- Variable hazards (including environmental and participants' personal abilities and the 'cut off' points).

4. What information will be provided for parents?
5. What consents will be sought?
6. What opportunities will parents have to ask questions (including any arrangements for a parents' meeting)?
7. What assurances are there of the leader(s) competencies?
8. What are the communication arrangements?
9. What are the arrangements for supervision, both during activities and 'free time' – is there a Code of Conduct?
10. What are the arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the visit?

The quality and competency of leadership is the single most important factor when planning any trip or outdoor activity. The school's 'Visits Co-ordinator' plays an essential role in ensuring that the points listed above have been covered and that best practice guidance is followed so that the Governors can approve the arrangements for the school trip. He or she is responsible in assessing the competence of the trip leader and any accompanying staff or volunteers and ensuring that they have the necessary training and expert advice. In addition they are responsible for establishing any emergency plans and for reviewing the visit.

As no two trips are the same, the level of competence/ qualification of leaders and helpers likely to be required should be identified though the risk assessment. Group leaders must be competent in dynamic risk assessment for the activity, so that they can continuously evaluate the implications of changing conditions and take into account any site-specific risk factors. Leaders should have a sound knowledge of first aid, life saving and emergency evacuation techniques appropriate to the activity and so ideally they should hold a recognised first aid qualification.

Organisers should ensure that the authority and chain of responsibility for each trip or activity is defined precisely and understood clearly, and that proper arrangements are made for reporting and accountability. The larger and more complex the activity, the more important such measures become.

All leaders carry a high degree of responsibility for the general safety and welfare of participant students. Where potentially hazardous activities are undertaken, consideration should be given to appointing independent safety officers, reporting to the activity organiser, either for the activity as a whole, or for specific elements of the activity.

The HSE website contains much more valuable guidance on planning school trips and ensuring that they can be achieved safely, www.hse.gov.uk/schooltrips/index.htm

Changes to first aid training

The HSE have revised the Approved Code of Practice and Guidance for the Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations 1981 and one of its effects are in the contents of First Aid training courses.

Students wanting to become qualified First Aiders can now complete either

- A 3 day (3 x 6 hour) First Aid at Work (FAW) course, or
- A 1 day (6 hour) Emergency First Aid at Work (EFAW) course

The new guidance also strongly recommends that all First Aiders are provided with annual refresher training of 3 hours duration.

A "Needs Assessment" must be carried out to establish the number of First Aiders (FAW and EFAW) / Appointed Persons required per site/location. It is essential to ensure that sufficient qualified First Aiders are always available to provide suitable cover to deal with the type of injuries or illnesses that could occur. The Guidance relating to the Needs Assessment has also been revised depending on the type of business and the number of workers on site.

Low hazard businesses include most offices, shops, libraries and classrooms in schools and colleges. For these areas the suggested number of first aid personnel depends on the number of people at any location:

- If less than 50 employees - at least 1 appointed person
- If between 50 and 100 employees - at least 1 fully trained first-aider (EFAW)
- If more than 100 employees there should be 1 fully trained first-aider (FAW) for every 100 employees or part thereof.

Higher Hazard areas include light engineering, food processing, warehousing, extensive work with dangerous machinery or sharp instruments, construction and chemical manufacture. It may also include school rooms used for practical work and first aid posts at public events. Again the number of first aid personnel depends on the number of people at the location:

- Less than 5 employees – at least 1 Appointed Person
- 5-100 employees – at least 1 First Aider (EFAW or FAW) per 50 employees or part thereof. The type of injuries that might arise in working with those hazards identified will influence whether the first aider is trained to EFAW or FAW standard.
- More than 100 employees – at least 1 First Aider (FAW) per 50 employees or part thereof

First Aiders who are already qualified do not need to take the new course. FAW/EFAW certificates will last for 3 years. Renewal of certificates should take place up to 3 months before the expiry of the current certificate although a further 28 days is permitted after expiry of the current certificate in which to gain renewal.

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You can contact Safegard directly for more information about any of the articles appearing in this edition of our Newsletter or for any other health and safety or food safety information you may require. Contact Safegard, Data Centre, 310 Broadway, Salford M50 2UE, Telephone: 0161 872 4781, www.safegard-online.co.uk

Recent prosecutions

UNREGISTERED GAS FITTER FINED £1250 PLUS COSTS

Hereford Magistrates recently fined an unregistered gas fitter £1250 plus £550 costs for work he carried out at a caravan park between May 2004 and May 2008. The caravan park was used for accommodation for seasonal fruit pickers and more than 700 workers had been put at risk by numerous defects with the installation and operation of gas appliances in the caravans. The defects included gas leaks and leakage of carbon monoxide creating fire risks and the possibility of carbon monoxide poisoning from fumes.

The gas fitter, Mr Loxston, was not CORGI registered and a prohibition notice had been served on him to cease gas work until he was registered. Special qualifications are required for working on gas appliances in caravans and residential park homes. Homeowners and businesses must check to ensure that gas fitters they employ have a valid Gas Safe Register ID; if they do not they should be reported to the HSE.

CARELESS DRIVING ON SITE RESULTED IN WORKER'S DEATH

A Dudley Metropolitan Council employee was killed when he was struck and run over by a wheeled shovel loader driving the wrong way on the one-way system at the council depot. The shovel loader driver could not see properly as the loading shovel was at a height that obscured his vision. Wolverhampton Court heard that the driver had not obeyed the site signs and speed limit of 8mph and did not take suitable precautions to ensure the safety of other vehicles and pedestrians.

The driver was fined £750 plus £500 in costs. The Council was fined £30,000 and ordered to pay £20,000 in costs for breaching Section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work Act i.e. 'It shall be the duty of every employer to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of all his employees,'