

Asbestos is still a major killer of tradespeople in Northern Ireland.



Always ask for the
Asbestos Register

Asbestos Still Kills

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Before working on any building constructed before 2000 you must 'Always ASK for the Asbestos Register.'

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Always ask for the Asbestos Register
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Asbestos Still Kills

This will help you identify:

- If asbestos is present
- If it is high risk material that requires a licensed contractor
- If I am trained (qualified) to work with the asbestos identified
- If I have the correct equipment

If you do not have access to the Asbestos Register, stop work until an asbestos survey has been completed.

Asbestos can be hidden and disturbing it can be fatal. It is the single greatest cause of work-related deaths in the UK and it's still a major killer in Northern Ireland. Thousands of tradespeople are unknowingly working with asbestos. Are you one of them?



What is Asbestos?

Asbestos was extensively used as a building material in the UK from the 1950s through to the mid-1980s. It was used for a variety of purposes and was ideal for fireproofing and insulation. Any building built or refurbished before 2000 (houses, factories, offices, schools, hospitals etc.) can contain asbestos, so it is still present in lots of buildings today.



If you are a tradesperson you are likely to come across asbestos in your work and may be at risk of disturbing it. Typical trades that may come into contact with asbestos are:

Tradespersons who are most likely to disturb asbestos

Electricians	Security installers
Plumbers	Fire alarm installers
Joiners	Shop fitters
Contractors	Insulation installers
Plasterers	IT installers
Carpenters	Telecoms installers

This list does not include all occupations at risk from potential exposure to asbestos

If you work in any of these trades or work in any similar trade you may be exposed to asbestos and need to know how to protect yourself.

When asbestos materials are damaged or disturbed they can release dangerous invisible fibres into the air which, if breathed in they may damage the lungs and can lead to the following fatal and serious diseases:

Mesothelioma

Mesothelioma is a cancer which affects the lining of the lungs (pleura) and the lining surrounding the lower digestive tract (peritoneum). It is almost exclusively related to asbestos exposure and by the time it is diagnosed, it is almost always fatal.

Asbestos-related lung cancer

Asbestos-related lung cancer is the same as (looks the same as) lung cancer caused by smoking and other causes. It is estimated that there is around one lung cancer for every mesothelioma death.

Asbestosis

Asbestosis is a serious scarring condition of the lung that normally occurs after heavy exposure to asbestos over many years. This condition can cause progressive shortness of breath, and in severe cases can be fatal.

Pleural thickening

Pleural thickening is generally a problem that happens after heavy asbestos exposure. The lining of the lung (pleura) thickens and swells. If this gets worse, the lung itself can be squeezed, and can cause shortness of breath and discomfort in the chest.



For this reason extreme caution and care is required when dealing with asbestos. There are no sudden changes in health after breathing in fibres - these diseases can take many years to develop. They are incurable and often fatal.

Where Can It Be Found?

Some common places you will find asbestos materials are:

- **Ceiling tiles**
- **Asbestos Insulation Board Ceiling**
- **Coating on ceilings, walls and stairwells (textured coatings)**
- **Sprayed coating on ducts, pipes and some ceilings**
- **Boards around radiators, windows, fireplaces, building columns, pillars**
- **Inside fire doors**
- **Soffit boards**
- **Insulation on pipes**
- **Sealants on pipe joints, gaskets**
- **Ropes and yarns**
- **Fuse boxes**
- **Electrical switchgear**
- **Water tanks**
- **Cement products: roof sheets, down pipes**
- **Asbestos roof**

Do you know how to identify asbestos?



Unfortunately, asbestos fibres are difficult to identify by eye. The only certain way to identify asbestos is to have a sample tested at a laboratory.

It's important the testing is conducted prior to any maintenance or removal of asbestos. Some examples below.



AIB ceiling tiles



Asbestos textured coating on a ceiling



Artex Ceiling



Insulation on pipes



Asbestos Cement roof



Asbestos cement as fabric of building



Asbestos vinyl floor tiles



Asbestos Rope



Asbestos roof slates



Asbestos cement flue

It is a legal responsibility for dutyholders of buildings constructed before 2000 to complete an Asbestos Register to identify where it is within the building and what type of asbestos it is. This will identify if a licensed asbestos removal contractor will be required. It will also ensure that any tradespeople working in the building will know how to protect themselves.

Planning For Working Safely

Before you start any job, '**Always ask for the asbestos register.**' You should assume that asbestos is present in any building constructed before 2000. You should avoid working with asbestos, if at all possible. Do not start any work on the building until you have identified where the asbestos is present. Your boss or the customer should be able to tell you if asbestos is present or not. There should be an asbestos register for workplace buildings – you can ask to see it and the premises manager should make it available to tradespeople in advance of any maintenance or repair work taking place. Be especially careful about areas that have not been checked - if there is no record and you have reason to suspect asbestos, ask for an asbestos survey to be done before carrying out any work.

If asbestos is in good condition and not likely to be disturbed, it is usually safer to leave it in place and manage it appropriately. Removal may be unnecessary and costly.

Where asbestos is present, you may only continue to work if you have had asbestos training, the work is properly planned and the right precautions are in place (e.g. you have the right equipment).

Once you have been trained, you can work with asbestos cement, textured coatings and certain asbestos materials which do not need a licence as well as certain work of 'short duration' on asbestos insulating board.

Never attempt work on asbestos containing materials that have sprayed coatings, board or lagging on pipes and boilers - only a licensed contractor should work on these. This will be detailed within the asbestos register.

Remember being properly trained and using the right equipment is vital.

What Training Do I Need?

Asbestos training is a legal requirement. If you plan to disturb asbestos (e.g. by drilling a hole in textured coating or removing an asbestos ceiling tile), then, as well as asbestos awareness training you will need job-specific non-licensed asbestos training. This will give you the skills to:

- Know where to find asbestos and what it looks like
- Use and fit a face-mask
- Deal with asbestos waste
- Safely carry out non-licensed tasks such as painting undamaged asbestos insulation board, cleaning light fittings attached to asbestos insulating board and cleaning guttering on an asbestos cement roof
- Use safe work methods to control exposure
- Understand asbestos health risks
- Decontaminate yourself and the work area

You can find asbestos training by contacting the UK Asbestos Training Association (www.ukata.org.uk Tel: 01246 824437) for a list of asbestos training providers in your area.

Other training organisations may also provide asbestos training. Ask for a combination of asbestos awareness and job-specific training (called ‘non-licensed asbestos training’).

Prepare a plan of work

Make sure it includes the following:

- Know where to find asbestos and what it looks like
- What the work is, and how long it is likely to last
- The address and description of the job
- When the work will be done
- The procedures to follow to reduce exposure and prevent the spread of asbestos
- The equipment needed, including personal protective equipment (PPE)
- Decontamination and waste disposal arrangements
- Emergency procedures

Make sure that everyone involved is fully aware of the plan and knows:

- What they need to do;
- Why each action is being taken; and
- What to do in the case of emergencies and accidents.

Work as planned

- Work safely with asbestos - minimise dust and protect yourself from breathing it in
- Use hand tools - not power tools
- Keep materials damp - not too wet
- Clean up as you go – use a special (Class H) vacuum cleaner, which can be rented from tool hire shops, not a brush
- Double-bag asbestos waste, label the bags properly and dispose of them at an appropriate waste site
- Protect yourself and others from breathing it in
- Wear a properly fitted, suitable respirator (e.g. disposable FFP3 type) – available from safety equipment supply shops – ordinary dust masks are not effective
- Wear suitable disposable overalls ('Type 5') and boots without laces or suitable boot covers
- Decontaminate yourself after work - wipe overalls with a damp rag and remove them before removing your mask
- Put disposable items in asbestos waste bags and dispose of them properly. Don't carry asbestos into your car or home or take overalls home to wash
- Don't smoke, eat or drink in the work area



Asbestos fibres are more likely to be released if the following happens:

- Asbestos containing materials are not identified before work starts
- Work is poorly planned or badly carried out
- You work on dry asbestos containing materials
- You use power tools or saws
- You sweep up asbestos containing debris

Make final checks

- Has the area been left clean and free of waste?
- Have all surfaces and tools been cleaned?
- Have the waste materials and used overalls, masks etc., been properly disposed of?

Want to know more?

Find out more about working with asbestos:

Visit: hseni.gov.uk/asbestos

Tel: 0800 0320 121

Or,

Contact your safety representative

