



Safety in Scouting in Berkshire



THE NEED TO MANAGE ASBESTOS IN SCOUT PREMISES

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 before 2000 can contain asbestos. Asbestos materials in good condition are safe unless asbestos fibres become airborne, which happens when materials are damaged.

The present 'Control of Asbestos' Regulations apply to all non-domestic premises, including Scout owned buildings, and imposes a duty (on the Executive Committee) to manage asbestos containing materials (ACM's) to prevent harm to those potentially exposed.

These duties include:

- taking reasonable steps to find out if there are ACM's in the building;
- presuming materials contain asbestos unless there is strong evidence that they do not;
- making, and keeping up-to-date, a record of the location and condition of the ACM's - or materials which are presumed to contain asbestos;
- assessing the risk of anyone being exposed to fibres from the materials identified;
- preparing a plan that sets out in detail how the risks from these materials will be managed;
- taking the necessary steps to put the plan into action;
- periodically reviewing and monitoring the plan and the arrangements to act on it so that the plan remains relevant and up-to-date; and
- providing information on the location and condition of the materials to anyone who is liable to work on or disturb them.

To summarise: there are three essential steps to an asbestos management survey:

- find out whether the premises contains asbestos, and, if so, where it is and what condition it is in. If in doubt, materials must be presumed to contain asbestos;
- assess the risk; and
- make a plan to manage that risk and act on it.

There are some basic principles to remember:

- ✓ asbestos is only dangerous when disturbed. If it is safely managed and contained, it doesn't present a health hazard;
- ✓ don't remove asbestos unnecessarily - removing it can be more dangerous than leaving it in place and managing it;
- ✓ remember that the duty to manage is all about putting in place the practical steps necessary to protect those undertaking maintenance work (whether these may be parents or other helpers, or employed contractors), building users and others from the risk of exposure to asbestos fibres. It is not about removing all asbestos.
- ✓ If any ACM's need to be sealed, encapsulated or removed, you will probably need to employ a licensed contractor.

Refurbishment and Demolition Surveys

An *intrusive* survey is required before any significant refurbishment works are carried out (such as structural alterations – partitions, walls, units, dismantling of fixed equipment or plant etc). Such surveys must be carried out by a competent asbestos surveyor, and will take samples of the materials present on the outer and inner component parts of the wall or ceiling for example. The prime purpose of this is to provide information to the persons undertaking the refurbishment work so that they may take appropriate precautions to prevent exposure to themselves or others.

A substantial part of the above information has been taken from the HSE website www.hse.gov.uk. Your District's Safety in Scouting Coordinator will be able to offer further guidance, or contact the County Safety in Scouting's Coordinator.

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