

GUIDANCE ON THE MANAGEMENT OF ASBESTOS

Asbestos is a naturally occurring mineral which was used extensively in building until the 1980's. It has excellent insulation qualities and resistance to fire and was used in an enormous variety of products and applications. Unfortunately, it can give off minute fibres, when broken, which can lead to severe respiratory and other diseases which can be fatal. Asbestos can no longer be used at all. The attached Appendix 1 gives further more scientific detail.

The Control of Asbestos Regulations 2002 cover how asbestos should be managed and handled. Basically, it places a duty on employers and property managers to manage asbestos through identification and appropriate procedures and requires only licensed persons to work with asbestos.

Generally, churches will contain little asbestos as most were built well before its introduction and have seen little changes since. Asbestos is most likely to occur in heating insulation and partitions installed in the 20th Century. Ideally, all churches should commission an Asbestos Survey which would identify where asbestos is located (through laboratory testing) and set out a basic management plan. A more detailed survey and plan may be needed where large quantities of asbestos are found. Such a survey will cost around £500.

Given these costs, not all churches will be able to undertake such a survey. They should adopt the following approach:

1. Quinquennial Architects should be asked to give an indication whether they suspect asbestos is present in the building
2. If asbestos is suspected, then its locations should be noted and no work undertaken until a survey has been undertaken.
3. Asbestos is generally benign if undisturbed. It is only when it is broken that spores are released. See the section below on managing asbestos left in place for further advice. If there is damage to suspected asbestos, a survey should be undertaken.
4. Asbestos should only be removed by licensed contractors. Your asbestos surveyor will be able to advise.
 - a. When the work is taking place, the area in which the work is taking place should only be occupied by workmen appointed to remove the asbestos **and not by members of the public or PCC staff/church members.**
 - b. It is strongly recommended that the building is closed whilst the asbestos removal is taking place.
 - c. When the asbestos removal is complete, the air in the area should be tested by an accredited laboratory.

5. If significant works are proposed to a building (including demolition) an survey should be undertaken prior to works
6. Your Diocesan Inspector can advise on a suitable asbestos surveyor in your area.
7. EIG should be advised where works to asbestos are proposed.

Managing Asbestos left in place

- If your survey recommends or if you decide to leave asbestos (or materials containing asbestos) in place make a note of where they are on your drawing or other records and keep this information up to date.
- Setting up a register of the location and condition of asbestos or suspected asbestos in buildings is a good idea, but be aware that some hidden asbestos may also be present.
- You must make sure that everyone who needs to know about the asbestos is effectively alerted to its presence. You can label asbestos clearly with an asbestos warning sign or use some other warning system for example a colour coding system. If you decide not to label the asbestos, you need to make sure that those who might work on the material know that it contains or may contain asbestos.
- You will need to introduce a method that will ensure anyone who comes to carry out work on the premises does not start before they are given the relevant information on any asbestos present. For example, a permit-to-work system, where you control access to the premises and only allow people in with a permit, would be one suitable method. This means that no one is allowed to work on the premises, unless they have a permit from you or a nominated employee, so you know what they are working on and where to prevent asbestos being accidentally disturbed.
- It can save time and prevent confusion if you make a note of the location of non-asbestos material which could be mistaken for asbestos (if known).

Appendix I

About Asbestos

There are different types of asbestos:

White asbestos - Chrysotile is obtained from serpentine rocks. It is less friable (and therefore less likely to be inhaled) than the other types and is the type most often used industrially. There is some evidence that this form of asbestos is not as harmful when inhaled. However it should be noted that there is also evidence that this type of asbestos **is** harmful, although not perhaps as harmful as other forms (refer to UK Health & Safety Commission report *Asbestos: Effects on health of exposure to asbestos*, 1985).

Brown asbestos - Amosite, also known as Grunerite, is an amphibole from Africa, named as an acronym from Asbestos Mines of South Africa.

Blue asbestos - Riebeckite, also known as Crocidolite, is an amphibole from Africa and Australia. It is the fibrous form of riebeckite. Blue asbestos is commonly thought of as the most dangerous type of asbestos (see above and below).

Amphibole group (Brown and Blue Asbestos)

Amosite and Crocidolite were used in many products until the early 1980s. The use of all types of asbestos in the amphibole group was banned in the mid-1980s. These products were mainly:

- Low density insulation board and ceiling tiles
- Asbestos cement sheets and pipes for construction, casing for water and electrical/telecommunication services
- thermal and chemical insulation (i.e., fire rated doors, limpet spray, lagging and gaskets)

As asbestos particles get smaller and lighter, they become more mobile and more easily wafted into the air, where human respiratory exposures typically result. The released fibers being heavier than air will eventually settle in quiescent conditions only to be re-suspended over and over again by any kind of activity or air currents over a period of time. They disperse by simple spontaneous airborne diffusion and through mass transport of the fibers.

For these reasons, asbestos is not an even source of contamination and thus does not tend to remain localized at its initial release point but will eventually spread throughout all available accessible areas of buildings, even into areas that don't have their own asbestos-containing products. Eventually asbestos from virtually all products that were manufactured from this mineral will invade each and every space within an affected building. This is because during the lifecycle of each asbestos product, microscopic fibers and larger particles or pieces of these products are typically produced during their residency.

The lifecycle of an asbestos containing product begins from the initial delivery of the product to the building, followed by its installation, normal usage forces, age-related deterioration, physical or chemical damage that often occurs, to finally its removal either for replacement or demolition. Any small impact or damage to a typical

asbestos containing product can easily release billions to trillions of fibers of asbestos into the immediate environment which then add to the pool of similar fibers and particles from other asbestos containing products within that building.

Depending on how and where asbestos was applied, it might not pose any risk to most users of the building. If the fibres cannot dislodge themselves, they cannot be inhaled, and thus the risk is absent.

However, with certain ways of applying asbestos, particularly flocking, asbestos fibers may gradually drop off into the air. Furthermore, in all cases, asbestos poses special hazards to maintenance personnel who have to drill holes in walls for installation of cables or pipes.

Also, even if the workers are protected, such maintenance operation may release fibers into the air, which may be inhaled by other users later. As a consequence, interventions in areas where asbestos is present often have to follow stringent procedures