

Asbestos awareness

Asbestos is a hazardous fibrous material that was widely used in construction for various purposes in different forms until it was banned in the UK in 1999.

Although some has been safely removed, much of it is still in place and we are likely to encounter it in industrial and domestic properties built before 2000.

Around 5,000 people die every year in the UK from asbestos-related diseases, which typically take decades to develop and cannot be cured. This has included firefighters.

When asbestos is in good condition and not disturbed, the risk of exposure is extremely low.

However, when asbestos is damaged or disturbed – such as in a fire – it releases invisible microscopic fibres into the air or smoke which may then be breathed in.

Fibres can also settle on clothing and equipment and be breathed in later if decontamination is not effective.

The HSE has published essential awareness information on where asbestos might be encountered and what it looks like in situ.

Please take time to familiarise yourself with these [diagrams](#) and [photos](#).

CAR requires non-domestic property owners to survey for its presence and provide location and condition information to the emergency services.

This information will be useful to incident commanders but is unlikely to be provided in most cases.

Lack of information must not lead to an assumption that asbestos is not present in properties older than 2000.

The service has [Asbestos Procedures](#) including specific decontamination methods.