

Village Hall Information Sheet



Asbestos

This information sheet provides information about asbestos, its identification and where it can be found. It also gives guidance on the legal duty to manage asbestos in non-domestic premises.

Reviewed February 2011



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Introduction

Asbestos was used as a building material from the 1950's through to the mid-1980's for a variety of purposes including fireproofing and insulation. It is therefore likely that anyone undertaking construction and maintenance work in a village hall may come across asbestos containing materials. This information sheet provides information about asbestos, its identification and where it can be found. It also gives guidance on the legal duty to manage asbestos in non-domestic premises.



1. What is asbestos?

There are three main types of asbestos, the blue and brown being the most dangerous, though these have not been imported into the country for over 25 years:

Chrysotile	white
Amosite	brown
Crocidolite	blue

Unfortunately it isn't always possible to identify them by their colour alone as during the ageing process the colour can become greyish and discoloured. In addition when it combines with other substances the colour can change.

Since 24 November 1999 the use of nearly all asbestos containing products has been prohibited. This includes second hand products. There are a few very special products that contain asbestos that can still be used but they are highly unlikely to be required in a village hall. However it is important to note that anyone undertaking construction and maintenance work may still come across asbestos containing materials. Most buildings over 20 years old are likely to contain materials that have asbestos content. In particular these materials can be found when stripping out old insulation from a building. Plumbers, carpenters, electricians and cabling engineers may also come across asbestos during routine repair, installation or refurbishment. The most common areas where asbestos can be found are:

- as asbestos cement products such as flat or corrugated sheeting on walls and roofs, cold water tanks, tiles, gutters, pipes and decorative plaster finishes
- as a spray coating around structural steel work, for fire protection in ducts, firebreaks, panels, partitions, soffit boards and ceiling panels
- sprayed asbestos and asbestos loose packing, generally used as fire breaks in ceiling voids
- as insulation lagging in buildings, on pipework, and on boilers and ducts as asbestos insulating board, used as wall partitions, fire doors, ceiling tiles etc
- fire doors, floor tiles and ceiling tiles
- certain types of old storage heaters
- as asbestos ropes and cloth used for gaskets, insulation, seals.

2. What is the risk?

For anyone carrying out any type of maintenance, repair or refurbishment work in buildings over about 20 years old they could be exposed to asbestos dust without realising it. Although the quantities may be small, if this happens repeatedly, it could lead to disease in later life.

The more asbestos dust breathed in the greater the health risk and for those who smoke the risk of lung cancer is greatly increased. There is no cure for asbestos related diseases.

3. Managing asbestos in buildings

As village hall management trustees are responsible for the management and repair of their village hall they are responsible for the asbestos in it. As well as protecting people from exposures to asbestos fibres, there is an explicit, 'duty to manage asbestos' in non-domestic premises, included in the **Control of Asbestos Regulations 2006**. If you own, occupy, manage or have responsibilities for premises which may contain asbestos, you will either have a **legal duty to manage the risk from asbestos**; or a duty to co-operate with whoever manages that risk.

In order to comply with these regulations the village hall management committee should:

- take reasonable steps to find asbestos in the premises and assess the condition of the materials
- if the building was built before 2000 assume asbestos is present
- presume that materials do contain asbestos unless there is strong evidence that they do not
- prepare a record of the location and condition of the materials and assess the risk from them
- prepare and implement a plan to manage the risk
- provide information on the location and condition of the material to anyone who is liable to disturb it.

The Health and Safety Executive have produced a step by step guide to managing asbestos in buildings. See Section 3.1 and Section 5 for further information.

3.1 Surveys

The village hall management committee can locate asbestos and note its condition by carrying out a simple walk through survey. This will require you to walk around the building and:

- identify all materials that may contain asbestos such as insulating board, insulation on pipework, partition walls or ceiling tiles. Include areas that are not normally visited such as roof voids
- if you have any doubts about any of the material you must presume it is present
- if you are not sure if you have found asbestos then a sample will need to be taken and analysed by an expert, with full asbestos safety precautions. **The village hall management should not attempt to do this themselves.** Do not break or damage any material which may contain asbestos in order to identify it.

The HSE publication, '**Manage buildings? You must manage Asbestos**' provides useful information on identification. If you are not confident to undertake this type of survey yourself you should seek specialist advice from an accredited company or someone who is certificated.



3.2 Act on your findings

If asbestos is located in the building then a decision has to be made on what to do about it.

- If it is in good condition and is not likely to be damaged or worked on or disturbed it is usually safer to leave it in place and manage it. You will need to regularly review its condition
- If it is in poor condition or it is likely to be damaged or disturbed by repair works, the village hall management committee will have to decide whether it should be repaired, sealed, enclosed or removed. This should be done by seeking specialist advice from an asbestos surveyor, a laboratory or a licensed contractor. It is essential that any works are carried out in accordance with the current asbestos regulations

- Keep a record of what you find. Record where the asbestos containing material is and its condition. Mark on a plan of the building where the asbestos is present
- Consider labelling the location that you think may have asbestos with warning signs (special labels are available).

3.3 Who to notify

The village hall management committee must inform anybody involved in building and maintenance work of:

- where the asbestos is
- the condition of the asbestos and,
- the potential risks to their health if they disturb it.

This will include plumbers, carpenters and engineers installing telephones, computers or other electrical equipment. They should be informed before they start any work in the building e.g. when asking for a quote for a job.

If materials that possibly contain asbestos are inadvertently disturbed while undertaking work, stop work immediately and isolate the area concerned and contact a licensed contractor.

If a situation arises where maintenance work may result in the disturbance or removal of asbestos, then you should seek specialist advice. For further information about licensed contractors visit the HSE website or telephone their information line. See Section 5.

4. Safe working procedures

Particular care needs to be taken when working with old insulation board, ceiling tiles, cement sheeting and other material. If they need to be cut, drilled, sanded or handled they should be treated as if they contain asbestos. **Never strip out insulation yourself. The law requires that a specialist contractor does this to strict rules.**

The following safe working procedures should always be followed:

- keep asbestos materials (including waste) damp whilst working on them
- don't use power tools on asbestos materials. They create dust; use hand tools instead
- wear protective equipment e.g. respirator mask; disposable overalls etc
- make sure the wearer knows how to use a mask; that it is clean and should it have a separate filter that this is regularly changed. All of these should be disposed of as asbestos waste
- don't allow waste to accumulate, clean up as you go
- put the waste in a suitable container (heavy duty polythene bag), put that into a second container and label it clearly to show that it contains asbestos
- clear up all asbestos dust using a dustless method (it is best to use a `Type H vacuum cleaner),if this is not possible use damp cloths and dispose of them as asbestos waste. Do not use brooms or brushes
- ensure you wash your hands and face before eating, drinking and smoking at the end of the day's work
- do not take home for washing any used disposable overalls that have been worn; these should be sent to a specialist laundry.



Please note that all waste material that contains asbestos is classified as special waste and has to be disposed of by a licensed contractor to a tip licensed to take asbestos containing materials.

5. Sources of further information and advice

ACRE and the Rural Community Action Network (RCAN) provides an information and advice service for village hall management committees through its network of village hall advisers. A link to the village halls advisers is available on the ACRE website: www.acre.org.uk ACRE publishes a range of village hall publications and information sheets, to support this service, which are available from the local RCAN member organisations. Village Hall Information Sheet 15, Health and safety legislation and village halls, may be of particular interest to readers of this publication.

The Health and Safety Executive has offices all across the UK and they provide a comprehensive selection of resources and information on asbestos which are available in different formats on request. Publications are free and available to download from their website and include:

Manage Buildings? You must manage asbestos

A short guide to managing asbestos in premises

Asbestos: The hidden killer (video)

Asbestos Licence Holders

Head Office is at: Redgrave Court, Merton Road, Bootle, Merseyside, L20 7HS.

Telephone infoline: 0845 345 0055 Website: www.hse.gov.uk

HSE priced and free publications are available from HSE Books, PO Box 1999, Sudbury, Suffolk CO10 2WA Tel: 01787 881165

Website: <http://books.hse.gov.uk/hse/public/home.jsf>

The Control of Asbestos regulations are available to view on the following Government website: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2006/2739/contents/made>

More information is available about working with asbestos is also available from your local authority environmental health officer.

Acknowledgement

ACRE gratefully acknowledges the assistance received from The Asbestos Information Centre Limited, ATSS House, Station Road East, Stowmarket, Suffolk IP14 1RQ (01449 770028) in the preparation of this information sheet. <http://www.aic.org.uk/>



ACRE and the Rural Community Action Network (RCAN) together deliver a local advisory service tailored to the needs of rural community buildings throughout England.

This service aims to ensure that hall trustees have access to accurate information about regulatory requirements, training and one-to-one advice and support with business planning. All RCAN advisers are networked by ACRE, undertake an OCN accredited course and are provided with resources to support their work. The national Hallmark quality standards programme encourages hall trustees to adopt best practice through a peer visitor programme. However, demand from halls for support often exceeds supply and demonstrates the need for a proactive, local service that can support all halls to achieve their aspirations and potential.

About ACRE

Action with Communities in Rural England is the national umbrella body of the Rural Community Action Network (RCAN), which operates at national, regional and local level in support of rural communities across the country. We aim to promote a healthy, vibrant and sustainable rural community sector that is well connected to policy and decision-makers who play a part in delivering this aim. ACRE is nationally recognised for its expertise in ensuring rural community-led solutions are central to public policy debate.

Rural Community Action Network (RCAN)

The Rural Community Action Network (RCAN) covers the whole of rural England through the work of 37 local member organisations, eight regional bodies and ACRE. Network members are county-based, independent, local development agencies that, for decades, have been delivering support on the ground to enable rural communities to improve quality of life for all. They act as a strategic voice for rural communities, allowing grassroots issues to be championed and solutions worked out in partnership between statutory, voluntary and private sector providers. Their strength lies in their ability to work within communities in an inclusive and holistic way, helping local people to develop local solutions and identify unmet needs through a unique approach to community-led planning. Alongside this, network members provide a trusted local support network for rural community groups, including dedicated expertise in arenas such as transport, housing, the management of community-owned facilities, social enterprise and rural services.

ACRE is pleased to have worked in partnership with AON Limited on this information sheet.

This Village Hall Information Sheet is one in a series available from ACRE's Village Hall Information Service. A full list of ACRE Information Sheets and other publications can be found at www.acre.org.uk



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