

# EXPLOSIVES HAZARDS

## Fact Sheet No 16: Asbestos.

Breathing air containing asbestos dust can lead to asbestos-related diseases. These are mainly cancers of the chest and lungs, and they kill more people than any other single work-related cause.



There is usually a long delay between the first exposure to asbestos dust and the diagnosis of the disease. This can vary between 15-60 years. The vast majority of people now dying were exposed to asbestos during the 1950's and 1960's when the use of asbestos in the UK was at its peak.

The use of asbestos insulation and most types of asbestos are now banned, but many thousands of tonnes of asbestos were used in buildings in the past. Much of this asbestos is still there and you cannot easily identify it from its appearance.

The most common uses were:

- as a spray coating on steel work, concrete walls and ceilings, for fire protection and insulation;
- as insulation lagging in buildings and factories, on pipework, and for boilers and ducts;
- as asbestos insulating board, such as Asbestolux and Marinite, used in wall partitions, fire doors, ceiling tiles etc;
- as asbestos cement products such as sheeting on walls and roofs, tiles, cold water tanks, gutters, pipes and in decorative plaster finishes.

## WHAT IS THE RISK?

The more asbestos dust you breathe in, the greater risk to your health and if you also smoke, the risk of lung cancer is even greater.

## WHAT SHOULD YOU DO?

Only work with asbestos if you have been specifically trained and authorised to do so.

Do not disturb asbestos or damage items marked as containing asbestos. If you discover a material which you suspect is asbestos, or find damage to an item marked as containing asbestos, stop work immediately and report it to the appropriate person.