

Asbestos

What is asbestos and why was it used in buildings?

Asbestos is a naturally occurring mineral which was used extensively from the 1920s because of its desirable properties of sound absorption and resistance to heat, electricity and fire. Many buildings built before 2000 have Asbestos Containing Materials (ACMs) as part of the building structure.

- **Insulation:** Asbestos was used both as fire-proof and electrical insulation, including in wiring, heating, and building insulation.
- **Cement:** Asbestos was mixed with cement to help prevent the cement from cracking as it dried. Pipes and even roofs were made of this asbestos cement.
- **Textiles:** Blankets and mats were also made using asbestos, woven into the materials to proof them against fire.

If these materials are not damaged and remain in good condition, then the risk from asbestos is very low and will not affect your health.

How is asbestos identified?

As part of our 'duty of care' NHS Property Services (NHSPS) is required to undertake Asbestos Management Surveys of our freehold (solely owned) properties to identify any ACMs that are readily accessible in the building.

It is also your responsibility to notify our Facilities Management Helpdesk on 0808 196 2045 if you notice ACMs that are damaged.

What will NHS Property Services do to manage the asbestos in the building?

If ACMs have been damaged or are in a poor condition, then it may be necessary to encapsulate or remove them. NHSPS will provide a detailed plan and our Facilities Management team will deal with any works that need to be undertaken including asbestos removal, air sampling or an environmental clean. We will advise on the amount of time the area may be out of use.

If asbestos is found, it will be inspected annually. The results of both surveys and re-inspections will be shared with you, the tenant. If NHSPS lease the building which you lease from us, then we will request this information from the landlord and share with you.

In some cases, it is better to leave in situ and manage rather than remove, as per asbestos regulations.

What do you need to do?

If ACMs are damaged, you must notify NHSPS immediately by calling the FM Helpdesk on 0808 196 2045. You should clear everyone from the area and prevent anyone from re-entering or taking anything from the area until NHSPS tells you it is safe to do so.

If there are ACMs in your building, then you should provide asbestos awareness training and information for your employees which explains what and where the materials are and what to do if they are damaged.

It is important to note that the NHSPS Asbestos Management Survey only identifies materials that are readily accessible. It **does not** identify materials that may be between walls or within doors. Therefore, it is very important that you do not carry out any work, or engage contractors to carry out any work, that is 'intrusive' such as drilling through walls, doors or work in ceiling voids. For such work, you need to obtain a "Licence to Alter" – you can find details of how to apply in the NHSPS Occupiers Handbook. A Refurbishment and Demolition Survey must be carried out before any work can be undertaken. **If in doubt, contact your Principal Property Manager or Facilities Manager.**

In some cases, your organisation may need to complete the Asbestos Management Surveys and re-inspections if this has been handed down to you in your lease. In these cases, you must have an escalation process in place and means of dealing with any event. Please check your lease to confirm your obligations.