

Asbestos in School: The monster in the cupboard

Do you know how much asbestos is in your child's school?

Around **75 per cent of Britain's schools contain asbestos**. With the right support and training, schools can manage asbestos effectively. Written by Joanne Lewis, chair of the education group for the Institution of Occupational Safety and Health

Learning to manage the risks in day-to-day activities is part of a good education. School pupils learn how to handle a wide variety of risks, from the busy road where a crossing or lollipop warden helps pupils to cross safely to the science lab where safety spectacles stop chemicals splashing into students' eye.

When the danger is hidden and its effects aren't apparent until years later, it becomes more menacing and more difficult to manage – a monster in the cupboard waiting to pounce. Asbestos is just such a monster, prevalent in many of our schools as well as domestic properties. But with knowledge and effective management, we can tame it. In order to manage the risk, it's important to understand what you're dealing with. The Asbestos Training and Consultancy Association (ATaC) says that around 75 per cent of Britain's schools contain asbestos and asbestos containing materials (ACMs). There are high-risk materials such as asbestos lagging on pipes and boilers; sprayed asbestos used for thermal insulation, fire protection, partitioning and ducts; some ceiling tiles; and asbestos insulation board. Some ACMs, such as floor tiles, asbestos cement roofing and guttering, and textured coatings, are considered a lower risk – but a risk nonetheless.

The menace of asbestos is two-fold: it causes respiratory illness and death, and it acts with stealth so many victims don't know about the damage until it's too late. Mesothelioma, the most potent asbestos-related cancer, can take **20 or 30 years** to emerge, and by the time patients realise they've got it, they often have only months left to live. In the UK, around 2,000 people die from mesothelioma every year. The figure has doubled since 1992, and it's set to rise further because many of the people who were exposed before the ban won't know they're ill yet. "ATaC's audit and our own research reveal that in many schools, staff are not aware of the dangers of asbestos; they do not know where it is and are not involved in its management," says Philip Parkin, general secretary of Voice: the union for education professionals. "Urgent action is required to improve standards of asbestos management, and to create an action plan for asbestos in schools, including: audits, risk assessments, relevant training and guidance, and for all asbestos to be identified and removed in a phased programme when schools are refurbished." "Everyone responsible for non-domestic premises should have their property checked for asbestos, using a competent person such as an accredited asbestos surveyor. And you need to keep checking any asbestos and ACMs to make sure you're aware of any new risks that arise. Most importantly, information about the risks needs to be passed on to anyone teachers, maintenance staff and pupils who might come into contact with asbestos or ACMs.



How many first-aiders do I need?

The findings of your first-aid needs assessment will help you decide how many first-aiders are required. There are no hard and fast rules on exact numbers and you will need to take into account all the relevant circumstances of your particular workplace. The HSE leaflets <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indgo/214.pdf>. First Aid at Work: Questions and Answered, provides general guidance on how many first-aiders or appointed persons might be needed.

Your risk assessment will need to include the types of hazard at the workplace and the types of injury that could occur.

Can legal action be taken against first-aiders?

It is very unlikely that any action would be taken against a first-aider who was using the first-aid training they have received. HSE cannot give any specific advice on this issue as it does not fall within HSE's statutory powers.

It is recommended that you seek legal advice, or advice from your employer's insurance brokers on whether their policies cover first-aiders' liability.

More information can be found on HSE website: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/contact/faqs/firstaid.htm>



Teenager pleads guilty to Tesco fire

A teenager has admitted starting a fire which destroyed a Tesco Express store in Hampshire last month. Daniel Eastley, a 19-year old from Havant, pleaded guilty to two counts of arson, by setting fire to bread crates at the rear of the store in Waterlooville. He was due to be sentenced at Portsmouth Crown Court on 20 August. When crews arrived at the store on 7 July they found the single story brick building well alight. The roof of the building



eventually collapsed and the fire was extinguished using seven jets, an aerial ladder platform monitor and six breathing apparatus. A 37-year-old man who worked at the store was taken to hospital suffering from the effects of smoke inhalation. Detective constable Mark Leonard from Hampshire's arson task force said: "Witness accounts and timely phone calls from the public to the emergency services have helped greatly with this investigation. Arson is the largest single cause of fire in the UK, leading to the loss of life, serious injury, and financial hardship in our communities. This case should send out a clear message to arsonists and the public that arson is a serious problem and arsonists will be caught and face the legal consequences."

Award Course Open to all, book now.....

Award Health & Safety Ltd are running an open course:
♦ **Asbestos Awareness Training** in the afternoon on 8th of October in Portsmouth only 4 places left
Be sure to call us soon.
Providing Quality Training at Affordable Prices
For further information or to book your training course please contact the office, details are below.

Award Health & Safety Ltd Tel: 0845 257 3158
29 The Oakwood Centre, Fax: 0845 257 6536
Downley Road, Havant www.awardhealthandsafety.co.uk
Hampshire, PO9 2NP info@awardhealthandsafety.co.uk

21-year-old faces lifelong care after 3-metre fall

A building firm that breached work at height regulations must pay more than **£10,000** in penalties after a **21-year-old** employee fell three metres while helping to re-roof a farm building. Gwyndaf Davies was working for Delme L James when he suffered multiple fractures and a traumatic brain injury after falling through the building's roof to the concrete floor below in April 2009 at Penwerddu Farm in Boncath, Pembrokeshire. The accident left him with the lasting effects of a brain injury, blind in one eye and partially sighted in the other. He has limited speech and cannot walk without help. After spending nine months in hospital undergoing extensive reconstructive surgery, he is still receiving intensive physiotherapy and speech therapy. It is likely that he will require significant care for the rest of his life. The HSE's investigation found that there was only limited edge protection to prevent workers falling from the roof and there were no measures to prevent people falling through the roof into the building.

Myth of the month

Myth: Health and safety bans bunting

The reality

There are no regulations banning people from hanging bunting at weddings and village fetes or flying flags for sporting events. HSE encourages people to have a bit of common sense about their attitudes to risk, not to make everything risk-free. There won't be an army of inspectors cutting down bunting or insisting flags are lowered. HSE exists to prevent people being killed or seriously injured at work, not to stop people celebrating in style.



