

# A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO MANAGING ASBESTOS IN SCHOOLS





## Introduction

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Schools pose a particularly high risk of asbestos exposure due to their age and the additional physical demands they are subjected to. It is estimated that as many as 75 per cent of schools in the UK contain asbestos materials.

Many school buildings that were built between the 1950s and 1980s contain significant quantities of asbestos as it was a common building material used for fireproofing and insulation. This combined with continuous maintenance and the attritional effects of vigorous school activities heighten the risk of materials being disturbed or damaged and asbestos fibres being released.

Exposure to asbestos can cause fatal diseases – more than 253 teachers have died from mesothelioma since 1980. It has been suggested that children exposed to asbestos could potentially be at five times greater risk of developing mesothelioma due to their longer life expectancy.

If you are responsible for the maintenance of your school's buildings you have a legal duty of care to protect students, staff and visitors. If the premises contain asbestos, you are required by law to manage the risk from this material or you have a duty to co-operate with whoever does.

New regulations came into force in 2002 (which were re-enacted in 2012) which place greater legal responsibilities on dutyholders to identify, locate and manage the risk from asbestos containing materials (ACMs) in schools. The penalties for non-compliance can be severe.

This document explains what your responsibilities are, where asbestos containing material is typically located, how to identify it and what you should do to in the event that you encounter it on school premises.

**Paul Phillips**  
Operations Manager,  
Global Environmental



## What is asbestos?

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Asbestos is an Ancient Greek word which means inextinguishable. It is a term used for a group of six naturally occurring fibrous minerals whose natural properties include the ability to withstand high temperatures, chemical attack and electrical currents.

These characteristics made asbestos very good for protecting buildings and equipment from heat/fire. It was added to other materials such as cement, textiles and insulating board making its protective properties more widely available.

Its properties of fireproofing, insulation and weather resistance meant asbestos was widely used as a material in a number of applications such as gaskets, fire blankets, ropes, asbestos insulation board (AIB), pipes, tanks, floor tiles, textured coatings ('Artex') and resin composites.

### History of its use

3000 BC	First recorded use in Cyprus
2000 BC -	Widely used in Ancient Greece
100 AD	Pliny the Elder notes that slaves working in asbestos mines die young of lung disease
1800s	Start of modern day usage in building material
1930s	The Asbestos Industry Regulations 1931
1940s	Extensive use during war years
1940s-1980s	Used extensively in building construction
1969	The Asbestos Regulations 1969 (came into force in May 1970)
1977	World production peaks (6 million tonnes mined)
1985	Use, supply & importation of blue & brown asbestos banned
1987	Introduction of Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations
1983	Removal Work requires a licence issued by HSE
1997	4820 tonnes imported into UK
1999	White asbestos banned
2002	Regulations revised to include duty to manage
2006	Revision of the 2002 Regs to become the Control of Asbestos Regulations 2006
2012	Revision of 2006 Regs to become the Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012

## Where is it used?

There are three main types of asbestos found in asbestos containing materials (ACMs).

- **Crocidolite** (blue asbestos)
- **Grunerite** (brown asbestos) (formerly known as Amosite – the name now dropped as it was a trade name originating in asbestos mines of South Africa)
- **Chrysotile** (white asbestos)

All of them are dangerous but blue and brown asbestos are more hazardous than white. You cannot identify them just by their colour. Sprayed coatings, lagging and insulating board are more likely to contain blue or brown asbestos. Asbestos insulation and lagging can contain up to 85% asbestos and are most likely to emit fibres (friable).

### Sprays



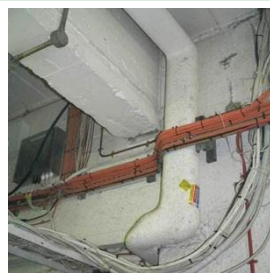
Generally used as fire protection in ducts, firebreaks, panels, partitions, soffit boards, ceiling panels and around structural steel work

**Type:** blue/brown

**% asbestos:** up to 85%

**Danger:** High releases fibre very easily (friable)

### Lagging



Moulded or preformed lagging used as thermal insulation of pipes and tanks/boilers

**Type:** blue/brown/white

**% asbestos:** up to 80%

**Danger:** High

### Insulating boards (AIB)



All purpose material used much as plasterboard is today

**Type:** brown/white

**% asbestos:** 20-40%

**Danger:** High, will release significant fibre if broken

### Ceiling tiles



Usually a form of Asbestos Insulating Board, may be flat bevelled edge tiles rather than as shown

**Type:** Brown/white  
**% asbestos:** 20-40%  
**Danger:** High

### Floor tiles



Vinyl or thermoplastic, note that the bitumen adhesive commonly used contains similar levels of asbestos.

**Type:** White  
**% asbestos:** 2-4%  
**Danger:** Low

### Cement



Fully or semi-compressed into flat or corrugated sheets used as roofing and wall cladding. Other asbestos cement products include gutters, rainwater pipes and water tanks

**Type:** White / Blue  
**% asbestos:** 10-15%  
**Danger:** Medium

### Coatings



Most common coating is Artex

**Type:** White  
**% asbestos:** 2%  
**Danger:** Low

### Bitumen



Used in roofing materials, damp proof courses, also adhesives

**Type:** White  
**% asbestos:** 2-4%  
**Danger:** Low

### Millboard/Paper



Used for insulation of electrical equipment and as a fire-proof facing on wood fibreboard.

**Type:** Chrysotile (unless v old)  
**% asbestos:** up to 100%  
**Danger:** High (friable material)

## Where is it found?

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### ROOF AND EXTERIOR WALLS

- Roof sheets, slates and tiles
- Guttering and drainpipe
- Wall cladding
- Soffit boards
- Panel beneath window
- Roofing felt and coating to metal wall cladding

### BOILER, VESSELS AND PIPEWORK

- Lagging on boiler, pipework, calorifier etc.
- Damaged lagging and associated debris
- Paper lining under non-asbestos pipe lagging
- Gasket in pipe and vessel joints
- Rope seal on boiler access hatch and between cast iron boiler sections
- Paper lining inside steel boiler casing
- Boiler flue

### CEILINGS

- Spray coating to ceiling, walls, beams/columns
- Loose asbestos in ceiling/floor cavity
- Tiles, slats, canopies and firebreaks above ceilings
- Textured coatings and paints

## **INTERIOR WALLS/PANELS**

- Loose asbestos inside partition walls
- Partition walls
- Panel beneath window
- Panel lining to lift shaft
- Panelling to vertical and horizontal beams
- Panel behind electrical equipment
- Panel on access hatch to service riser
- Panel lining service riser and floor
- Heater cupboard around domestic boiler
- Panel behind/under heater
- Panel on, or inside, fire door
- Bath panel

## **FLOORING MATERIALS**

- Floor tiles, linoleum and paper backing, lining to suspended floor

## **AIR HANDLING SYSTEMS**

- Lagging
- Gaskets
- Anti-vibration gaiter



## The risks

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According to the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) asbestos is the greatest single cause of work-related deaths in the UK and currently accounts for over 3,000 workplace-related fatalities each year. Given the long delay between first exposure and the onset of disease (15-60 years) and its widespread use after the war this number is expected to go on rising for the next ten years.

Although asbestos is a hazardous material, it only poses a risk to health if its fibres become airborne and are then inhaled. As long as it is in good condition and is not disturbed or damaged there is no risk.

The fact that ACMs were used extensively in the construction and refurbishment of buildings in the last Century means many people still have the potential to be exposed – particularly building and maintenance workers. There are four main diseases associated with inhalation of asbestos fibres.

### Mesothelioma

Mesothelioma is a cancer of the pleural and peritoneal lining. Most of the people who develop mesothelioma have worked on jobs where they inhaled asbestos fibres and it is considered to be almost exclusively related to asbestos exposure. By the time it is diagnosed, it is almost always fatal. Mesothelioma has a long latency period (time between exposure and onset of disease) of at least 15 and sometimes as long as 60 years. The annual number deaths from Mesothelioma has increased from 153 in 1968 to 2535 in 2012. It is estimated that 100-150 mesothelioma deaths a year in women could be caused from asbestos exposure in schools in the 1960s and 1970s.

### Lung Cancer

Asbestos has been recognised as an important risk factor for lung cancer for many years. Lung cancer is a malignant tumour of the bronchi – the tubes carrying air to and from the lungs. The tumour grows through surrounding tissue, invading and often obstructing air passages. Again, the disease has a long latency period – typically at least 20 years. While the number of deaths attributable to asbestos cannot be determined directly the HSE estimates that death rates are on a par with those for Mesothelioma.

### Asbestosis

Asbestosis is defined as lung fibrosis (scarring of the lung tissue) and is caused by heavy and regular inhalation of asbestos fibres. This scarring impairs the elasticity

of the lung, restricting their expansion and hampering their ability to exchange gases. This leads to inadequate oxygen intake to the blood. It is a slowly progressive disease with a latency period of 15 to 30 years. There were 464 deaths due to the disease in 2012.

### **Diffuse pleural thickening**

This is a non-malignant disease in which the lining of the lung (pleura) becomes scarred. This can extend over a large area and may restrict expansion of the lungs, leading to breathlessness. Although not fatal, the disease is a chronic condition with no cure and has been cited as the cause of 430 new cases of disablement in 2013.

### **Who is at risk?**

- Students
- Staff
- Visitors
- Building contractors
- Maintenance staff

## Asbestos - the law

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A number of Acts and Regulations apply to the management of asbestos in the workplace:

### **Health and Safety at Work Act (1974)**

This requires employers to conduct their work in such a way that employees will not be exposed to health and safety risks, and to provide information to other people about their workplace which might affect their health and safety.

### **Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations (1992)**

Sets out duties to maintain workplace buildings/premises to protect occupants and workers.

### **Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (1999)**

Requires employers and self-employed people to assess the risk to the health and safety of employees and visitors to their premises and identify and implement appropriate measures to protect them.

### **The Control of Asbestos Regulations (2012)**

These Regulations came into force in April 2012 and consolidate three previous sets of Regulations covering the prohibition, control and licensing of asbestos. They require employers to prevent the exposure of their employees to asbestos, or where this is not practicable, to reduce the exposure to the lowest possible level.

The Regulations require mandatory training for anyone liable to be exposed to asbestos fibres at work which includes maintenance workers and others who may come into contact with or who may disturb asbestos. The regulations also specify the work methods and controls that should be used to prevent exposure and spread, and establishes airborne exposure limits.

To download click: <http://bit.ly/wolmZ9>

## Construction (Design and Management) Regulations (2007)

These regulations require the client to pass on information about the condition of any premises (including the presence of hazardous materials such as asbestos) to the CDM Coordinator before any work begins and to ensure that the health and safety file is available for inspection by any person who needs the information.

### Enforcement

The HSE works alongside Local Authorities to enforce these laws and Regulations. The work is carried out by the Field Operations Directorate (FOD), Hazardous Installations Directorate (HID) and also Offshore Division (OSD).

Each office comprises operational inspectors for inspection and enforcement, specialist inspectors such as medical and occupational hygiene inspectors and administrative staff who deal with complaints and undertake promotional work.



Until recently inspectors carried out visits to advise and assist dutyholders and to put management systems in place. However increasingly enforcement action is now being taken if inspectors find that maintenance workers or others are at serious risk of being exposed to asbestos fibres.

The penalties can be severe and involve personal fines of up to £20,000, Disqualification from Directorship, closure of the premises and even a custodial sentence.

## RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

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### August 2014

A 36 year old man who was diagnosed with mesothelioma at the age of 30 was given a council payout of £275,000 after claiming that he was exposed to asbestos while a school boy in Devon during the 1980s and 90s. While Devon County Council takes great care to manage asbestos in its buildings it follows the guidelines that asbestos is safe as long as it isn't disturbed.

Current government policy, based on HSE advice, is for asbestos "which is in good condition and remains undamaged and undisturbed" to be left in situ and managed by the school. However, in the past decade there has been a growing campaign, led by the Asbestos in Schools group as well as the Joint Union Asbestos Committee, for the phased removal of all asbestos materials. The award was made without an admission of liability.

### July 2014



A 2013/2014 HSE inspection of 153 non-local authority schools resulted in 44 schools (29%) being sent written advice on improving their asbestos management. 20 of the 44 were issued with improvement notices: 8 had no management plan; 8 had inadequate assessments; 2 had failed to manage the risks and 2 had inadequate training and information for employees. The HSE reminded headteachers that managing asbestos requires ONGOING attention. "The finding that nearly half of the schools did not have a comprehensive system in place to ensure that anyone who may disturb asbestos – staff or contractors – is told of its presence, is of great concern."

**Christine Blower, NUT General Secretary**

### **March 2013**

The Education Select Committee held a one-off enquiry about asbestos in schools to consider available evidence about the risks asbestos containing materials create in schools. The enquiry seeks to establish whether the existing management systems and regulatory approach is sufficient.

The Government has confirmed it will review its policies on asbestos in schools once an independent advisory committee has issued its findings on the relative vulnerability of children to the substance

### **January 2013**

Broomfield school was closed for 10 days after asbestos discovered on site. Pupils of the secondary school, in North London were sent home, after one of the heating pipes burst during freezing temperatures. Repair work on the damaged pipe took place over the weekend, but instead of fixing the problem, suspected asbestos was discovered.

### **December 2012**

Staffordshire County Council and a refurbishment firm landed penalties totalling £27,000 for exposing a nursery class, school staff and two joiners to asbestos fibres. Two joiners were cutting through a large built-in cupboard in the nursery class when they noticed unidentified material nailed to the back of it, which exposed 17 children aged between three and four, a teacher, teaching assistant and a school cleaner to asbestos fibres. An HSE investigation into the incident found the council had failed to do a pre-refurbishment asbestos survey before work started.

### **November 2012**

More than 170 parents and family members signed a petition saying they had lost confidence in Waltham Forest Council over its handling of an asbestos discovery at a school. It came after three classes and 18 staff from St Mary's Church of England Primary School had already relocated to the site early in September 2011,

The petition by parents alleged that the council ignored independent advice in April 2011 to put an asbestos management plan in place for the site. Campaigners also claim the fiasco has cost the council at least £70,000 per half term - just for transporting children from The Drive site to Edinburgh Primary.

## Your legal responsibilities

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### Who is responsible?

Under the Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012 the duty to manage asbestos in schools ultimately falls upon the “employer”. For community schools, community special schools, voluntary-controlled schools, maintained nursery schools and pupil referral units, the “employer” is the local authority. For academies, free schools, voluntary-aided and foundation schools, it will be the school governors. For independent schools, it may be the proprietor, governors or trustees.

In situations where budgets for building management are delegated to a school by the local authority, the duty is shared between the local authority and the school governors with both parties having responsibilities for the repair and maintenance of the premises.

### The duties

Regulation 4 of the Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012 requires the ‘dutyholder’ to:

- Take reasonable steps to find out if there are materials containing asbestos in non-domestic premises, and if so, its amount, location and condition
- Presume materials contain asbestos unless there is strong evidence otherwise
- Maintain a record of the location and condition of the asbestos containing materials – or materials which are presumed to contain asbestos
- Assess the risk of anyone being exposed to fibres from the materials identified
- Prepare a plan that sets out in detail how the risks from these materials will be managed
- Take the necessary steps to put the plan into action
- Periodically review and monitor the plan and the arrangements to act on it so that the plan remains relevant and up-to-date
- Provide information on the location and condition of the materials to anyone who is liable to work on or disturb them.

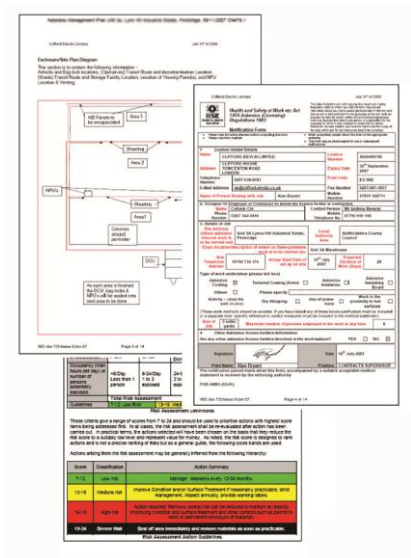
Remember that the duty to manage is about putting in place the *practical* steps necessary to protect occupiers and maintenance workers from the risk of exposure to asbestos fibres.

# What should dutyholders do?

Regulations 4 of the Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012 requires dutyholders to develop, implement and maintain a plan to manage any asbestos materials that occur on the premises.

A nominated person should be appointed to prepare and implement the **Asbestos Management Plan** which should be documented and consist of the following elements:

- Asbestos Policy Statement
- Asbestos Register
- Responsibilities and duties (including a management structure flow chart)
- Emergency Plan
- Procedures
- Training Arrangements
- Implementation and Review of the Policy/plan (including time-scale for monitoring and re-inspection of sealed or undisturbed ACMs)



## Preparing an Asbestos Register

Dutyholders should take reasonable steps to locate any asbestos-containing materials in school premises and assess their condition. You can conduct the survey yourself or appoint suitable trained person/s to do it for you. If you choose to do it yourself, there are a number of things you can do:

- look at building plans and any other relevant information (such as builders' invoices) which may tell you if and where asbestos was used in its construction or refurbishment



- carry out a thorough inspection of the premises both inside and out to identify materials that are or may be asbestos
- consult others, such as the architects, employees or safety representatives. Anyone who has information on the whereabouts of asbestos in your premises is required to make this available to you as the dutyholder.

### *How do you identify ACMs?*

Some material obviously does not contain asbestos such as glass, solid wooden doors, floorboards, bricks and stone. But other materials can only be identified by an experienced surveyor, who even then will want to take samples to confirm his opinion.

If you are in any doubt, it is safer to presume that a material contains asbestos, unless there is strong evidence that it does not. An insulating board marked “supalux” would be a good example, supalux post dates the use of asbestos in insulating boards.

If you are not confident you have the knowledge to carry out the survey yourself, are unsure whether materials contain asbestos or you are planning major maintenance or refurbishment work you may choose to commission a third party to perform a detailed survey of your premises. Such should be undertaken by competent people, for example laboratory analysts, suitably trained building surveyors or specialist asbestos removal contractors with the appropriate accreditation.

The survey may involve visual inspection, non-intrusive sampling and destructive sampling depending on the circumstances:

**Management Survey:** presumed asbestos containing materials located in accessible areas that could potentially be disturbed during normal occupancy of the building are identified and their condition and circumstances assessed and recorded.

**Pre-demolition/ Pre-Refurbishment Survey:** involves a full inspection of all areas within the part of the building affected by the proposed works and will involve accessing all voids duct, etc in the affected areas. Representative samples of suspected asbestos containing materials are collected on-site (which may typically involve destructive inspection techniques) and analysed in a laboratory to verify the presence of asbestos.



As part of the survey the condition of any ACMs or presumed ACMs should be assessed as well as the likelihood they will be disturbed. When evaluating their condition the following factors should be taken into account:



- Is the surface of the material damaged, frayed or scratched?
- Are the surface sealants peeling or breaking off?
- Is the material becoming detached from its base? (this is a particular problem with pipe and boiler lagging and sprayed coatings)
- Are protective coverings designed to protect the material, missing or damaged?
- Is there asbestos dust or debris from damage near the material?

The probability that the ACMs will be disturbed will depend upon the number of people who frequent the area in question, their activities and the accessibility of the material.

The results of the survey and assessments with recorded decisions as to what to do and when by. Short term actions may include actions to improve the condition or reduce the risks, longer term actions will be to monitor condition and reassess the risks at regular intervals.



Dutyholders must arrange for the results of the survey to be documented and made available to anyone who occupies or visits the premises. This may involve a schematic drawing or other record which shows where the asbestos or presumed asbestos is, its type if known, its form, its amount and what condition it is in.

If it is stored electronically via the Internet or on a PC database, it can be easier to update.

Make sure that employees, anyone involved in building or maintenance work and any contractors working on the premises know where it can be found and consult it before carrying out work.

**Note:** There may be some areas of the premises which you cannot look at, such as in roofs and heating ducts and behind ceiling tiles and wall partitions. You should note these on your drawing. These areas should then be presumed to contain asbestos until they can be inspected.

### Next steps

If the asbestos is in good condition, unlikely to be damaged, worked on or disturbed it is usually safer to leave it in place and manage the risk.



Make a note of where they are on your drawing or other records and keep this information up to date.

You may wish to label it with an appropriate sticker.

If the asbestos is in poor condition or is likely to be damaged or disturbed you will need to decide whether it should be repaired, sealed, enclosed or removed.

### Repair

Where ACMs are not damaged and are unlikely to be disturbed, repair by either sealing or enclosing it can be seen as the preferable course of action to removal. “Enclosure” is typically carried out by erecting boxing around a lagged pipe for example so that there is greatly reduced risk of the pipe insulation becoming accidentally damaged.

Sealing involves ensuring that the material in question has a good coating such as paint so that fibres cannot be released from the surface. This would typically be the treatment of choice for Asbestos Insulating Board products.

Encapsulation involves the application of a seamless protective coating which is impact resistant, flexible and is impervious to water, oil and grease.



There are a number of methods including filling, wrapping and isolated encapsulation. Naturally all repairs should be carried out using non-asbestos containing materials.

## Removal



If the ACM cannot be easily repaired or protected it will have to be removed by trained and competent person/s i.e. a contractor licensed by HSE. This is carried out by trained operatives in a controlled area and in accordance with current legislation.

Negative pressure enclosures are set-up to seal and contain the contaminated area and prevent the spread of fibres. Specialist vacuuming equipment controls asbestos fibres at source.

Asbestos is removed using wet techniques, by spaying or injecting water which contains a wetting agent into the material.

Material that has been removed is placed in sealed containers for disposal. On completion, the area should be thoroughly cleaned and decontaminated and then inspected visually and tested by an Environmental Analyst using the 4 stage clearance protocol before being authorised and certificated for re-occupation.

## Disposal

Asbestos waste should be sealed in heavy duty red polythene sacks and clearly labelled. As these sacks are removed from the enclosure, they are double-bagged in clear polythene sacks before it is transported to a disposal site. The waste can only be disposed of at a site licensed to receive it. The disposal of ACMs is regulated by the Hazardous Waste Regulations 2005.



## Monitor your Plan

You should make arrangements to regularly monitor your plan. This will include re-inspecting ACMs left in place, including those you have sealed or enclosed, to make sure that their condition has not changed.

The frequency of re-inspection will depend on the type of material, where it is and its condition, but it should be at least every six months for high risk materials to twelve or 24 months for low risk materials.

## Emergency Plan

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### **What to do if you encounter exposed suspected asbestos material in the school:**

- 1 Immediately clear the area of all personnel and isolate the area, such as a single room, by closing all the doors. Turn off air conditioning/warm air systems if possible.
- 2 Prohibit access to the area - lock doors and/or tape over entrances, install barriers or appoint a member of staff to guard the area to prevent access
- 3 Inform the 'named representative' (as documented in the Asbestos Management Plan) for the school i.e. Departmental Secretary, Administrator, Safety Officer, Caretaker, Building Manager
- 4 Inform the dutyholder and/or emergency services
- 5 A competent person should be asked to attend site to assess the situation, access the area with appropriate personal protective equipment and decide on a further course of action
- 6 Relay information of potential exposure to all persons who may have been affected by the uncontrolled release and arrange decontamination
- 7 Keep the area clear of anyone not involved in the remedial action until air monitoring has confirmed that fibre counts are at acceptable levels
- 8 Following the assessment by the competent person, the incident may need to be reported under RIDDOR (Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995) by the School's Health & Safety Officer (HSO)
- 9 All incidents should be recorded in the School's "Dangerous Occurrence and Incident Report Form". The HSO should gather information, make notifications to relevant parties such as Occupational Health, Estate Management, the Department and develop actions in response to the incident

## How we can help

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Our asbestos management division has skills and resources to help dutyholders, developers and contractors to discharge their duties under the Control of Asbestos Regulations and the Construction, Design and Management Regulations.:

Our services include:

### Surveys



We can arrange for a survey of your school to be conducted in which our experts will identify any asbestos containing materials present, assess their condition and risk and recommend the most appropriate course of action. Depending on the circumstances, the survey may entail visual inspection, non-intrusive sampling, destructive sampling and laboratory analysis.

### Management



We can offer advice or manage the whole process for you from surveying your premises, preparing/maintaining your management plan and providing a schedule of ongoing inspection and monitoring. We can even project manage any remediation including preparing a documented specification, procuring a suitable licensed contractor and supervising the works on-site.

### Training



We offer a range of training courses and seminars to educate clients and occupants about asbestos awareness and management. Our asbestos awareness ½ day seminars are suitable for maintenance staff, building/property managers and persons responsible for Health & Safety.

For more information please contact us on Tel +44 (0) 20 7300 7288 or email [info@globalenvironmental.co.uk](mailto:info@globalenvironmental.co.uk)

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