

BBSRC Asbestos Policy

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Policy statement

BBSRC recognises the health hazards arising from exposure to asbestos and is committed to ensuring that an effective strategy and associated policies and procedures are in place in order to manage the risks to employees, students, visitors and other people working on BBSRC sponsored sites.

BBSRC is committed to fulfilling its legislative obligations under the Control of Asbestos Regulations (2012) (<http://www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/regulations.htm>).

Everyone who needs to know about the presence of asbestos will be informed. No one will be allowed to start work that could disturb asbestos unless the correct procedures are followed.

The Asbestos policy has been agreed with local Health & Safety Advisors and the Trade Union Side and complies with statutory best practice.

The UK Shared Business Services (SBS) provides HR Services across the Research Councils. However some BBSRC employees are deployed at establishments that do not access services from the SBS. In these cases references to the SBS or system (Employee Self Service) will not apply and employees should refer to their local HR team for assistance.

1. Principles

- 1.1 BBSRC will ensure that the Asbestos policy complies with and reflects the legal framework and best practice.
- 1.2 Every effort will be made to reduce the risk to employees, students, visitors *etc.* by effectively managing and controlling work where asbestos materials are present.
- 1.3 BBSRC will implement detailed procedures and agreed practices across the organisation.
- 1.4 The policy will be supported by regular training of key employees to ensure that they have a level of knowledge and competence commensurate with their involvement.

2. Definitions

- 2.1 Asbestos is a naturally occurring mineral that was used in a range of building materials to make them more rigid and fire resistant. Any buildings built or refurbished before the year 2000 may contain asbestos.
- 2.2 There are three main types of asbestos:

- Chrysotile (white asbestos)
- Amosite (brown asbestos)
- Crocidolite (blue asbestos)

They are all dangerous carcinogens, but blue and brown asbestos are more hazardous than white. Despite their names it is not possible to identify them just by their colour.

- 2.3 Asbestos fibres are present in the environment so people are exposed to very low levels of fibres. However, a key factor in the risk of developing an asbestos-related disease is the total number of fibres breathed in. Working on or near damaged asbestos-containing materials or breathing in high levels of asbestos fibres, which may be many hundreds of times that of environmental levels could increase a person's chances of getting an asbestos-related disease.
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/dangerous.htm> for information on ill-health.

3. Organisation and responsibilities

- 3.1 **BBSRC Chief Executive:** has overall responsibility for ensuring that:
 - Effective structures are in place to manage asbestos throughout the organisation.
 - An effective asbestos policy is developed and implemented consistently.
 - Positive action is taken to improve performance where problems are identified with the safe management of asbestos containing materials.

3.2 **Establishment Director:** are responsible under the institute grant agreement for the management of asbestos issues within their establishment including:

- Making adequate resources available for managing asbestos.
- Ensuring an asbestos management plan is in place, actioned and reviewed as necessary.
- Making sure establishment policies are created, reviewed and publicised.
- Periodic consultation with employees and safety representatives to improve awareness and seek suggestions for improvement.

3.3 **Head of Estates, Engineering and/or Facilities:** is responsible for implementing a proactive asbestos management plan to minimise the risk presented by asbestos containing material on the premises, this will include:

- Preparing an asbestos register identifying the location of asbestos containing materials for the premises, the risk presented by the asbestos containing materials and the priority for abatement.
- Communicating the asbestos management plan, policy and procedures by ensuring that any staff, students, contractors or visitors who may come into contact with asbestos containing materials are made aware of their location and the procedures to be followed if they are likely to disturb the asbestos.
- Formulating an emergency plan on the procedures to be followed if any asbestos containing materials are accidentally damaged.
- Ensuring risk assessments are prepared for the work activities they control ensuring due attention is given to the threats posed by asbestos at any particular site and adequate precautions are used.
- Being responsible for ensuring that the appropriate level of training and refresher training for the establishment is undertaken.
- Making sure all asbestos related accidents, incidents and ill health are reported, investigated and any necessary remedial action taken.

3.4 **Health and Safety Advisors:** are responsible for:

- Providing advice on compliance with the legislation and the level of risk.
- Acting as a point of contact for employees, students, contractors *etc.*
- Providing or arranging for asbestos training and information.

- Maintaining records on asbestos related accidents and incidents and overseeing any investigations.

3.5 Project planners for building and demolition work: must ensure all asbestos issues are dealt with prior to beginning any project. They are responsible for:

- Ensuring that projects which need to disturb asbestos containing materials identify this within the project plan. The asbestos must then be removed or encapsulated within the timescales and funding of the project.
- Carrying out more detailed survey work as necessary, where intrusive work is planned at any property.
- Employing, as necessary, a professional individual for co-ordinating and arranging removal and remediation work where there are insufficient in house expertise, resources or knowledge.

3.6 Employees: will be advised of their role and responsibilities regarding asbestos. Everyone has a responsibility for asbestos issues, including:

- Taking care of their own health and safety with regard to asbestos containing materials.
- Making sure others are not put at risk by their actions or omissions.
- Informing their manager and/or the health and safety advisor immediately about any disturbance or deterioration of asbestos containing materials or suspect materials.
- Following the Asbestos policy and assisting their management with the implementation of the Policy.
- Attending any relevant asbestos training if appropriate to their jobs.
- Reporting shortcomings or problems regarding the provision of relevant asbestos information and the conduct of others on site.

4. Arrangements for managing asbestos in the workplace premises

4.1 Management plan

An Asbestos Management Plan will be produced by each establishment. It covers all aspects of the asbestos management process including:

- Who is responsible for management of asbestos.
- Key employees and their responsibilities.
- The location and condition of the asbestos-containing material (Asbestos Register).
- How the risk from this material will be managed.
- A timetable for action.

- Monitoring arrangements.
- Training arrangements for employees and contractors
- The arrangements/mechanism for passing on information about the location and condition of asbestos containing materials to those who need it

The Head of Estates should ensure that the plan and the arrangements are reviewed at regular intervals or if the use of the building changes, work is carried out on the asbestos, or if there is an incident.

4.2 Control of access to asbestos-containing materials

Access to asbestos-containing materials in the premises will be controlled to prevent inadvertent disturbance of the material and the release of asbestos fibres. A plan or register showing the location of all asbestos-containing materials and presumed asbestos-containing materials will be made available. Systems will be put in place locally to ensure that anyone liable to disturb asbestos-containing materials is made aware of their location, including any worker/contractor carrying out maintenance.

4.3 Asbestos register

The establishment asbestos register should contain the following information:

- A description of the specific item.
- Where the material is located (description or photograph).
- How much material is located (by area/volume).
- Surface coating or containment of material.
- The type of asbestos present.
- An assessment of its condition.
- An assessment of how accessible the material is.
- An assessment of the risk assessment that underpins the decision to remove or manage in situ asbestos containing materials.
- Inspection periodicity.

The register should be readily accessible to those that need to check it.

4.4 Inspection and maintenance

The condition of all asbestos-containing materials or materials suspected of containing asbestos will be inspected at agreed intervals within the management plan to ascertain that there has been no damage or deterioration. Where damage or deterioration is found, the asbestos-containing material will be reassessed and repaired or removed as appropriate.

4.5 Arrangements for controlling work on asbestos in the workplace premises

Any work on, or removal of, asbestos-containing materials must comply with the general requirements in the Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012. All work will be controlled to ensure that adequate precautions are taken to prevent the release of asbestos fibres. Work with asbestos and asbestos-containing materials is subject to risk assessment to determine whether it is licensable (work notifiable to the HSE at least 14 days in advance of starting intended work) or non-licensable. Depending on the type of work, some non-licensable activities are also required to be notified to the HSE ("notifiable non-licensed work"). Guidance on this is given on the HSE website.

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/licensing/licensed-contractor.htm>

High risk work must only be carried out by a licensed contractor (licensed by the HSE).

For certain work involving asbestos, such as demolition, construction work or work on removing asbestos or asbestos-containing materials from buildings, structures or installations, a written plan of work (or “Method Statement”) must be drawn up before work of any kind begins. The plan should specify that, so far as is reasonably practicable, how the asbestos and/or asbestos-containing materials are removed or made safe (assuming that it is not possible to undertake the works in some other way, thus eliminating the need to disturb asbestos). The plan of work should include the following information:

- The nature and probable duration of the work.
- The address and location where the work is to be carried out.
- The methods to be used where the work involves the handling of asbestos or of material containing asbestos so as to prevent or reduce exposure.
- The characteristics of the equipment, including personal protective equipment, used for the protection and decontamination of those carrying out the work.
- The protection of other people present on or near the work site.
- The measures for cleanliness of premises and plant.

Managers must ensure that a copy of the plan of work is notified to HSE before the start date of the projected work and 14 days prior to commencement of work. Notification to the HSE is via one of their forms found at <https://www.hse.gov.uk/forms/asbestos/>

4.6 Selection and control of contractors to work on asbestos-containing materials

When contractors are engaged to work on the premises, adequate steps will be taken to ensure the contractors are competent and have sufficient skills and knowledge to do the job safely and without risk to health. Only contractors licensed by the HSE will be used for the removal of asbestos-containing materials, unless the work involves the removal of materials in which:

- Asbestos fibres are firmly linked in a matrix
- The exposure during the removal process is likely to be sporadic or of low intensity

Contractors hired to carry out building or allied trade work that will involve minor work with asbestos or asbestos containing materials must comply with the Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012 even if the work is not notifiable.

5. Procedures for dealing with Health and Safety issues

5.1 Emergency plans should be in place to deal with untoward occurrences involving asbestos or asbestos containing materials. If a health and safety problem related to work with asbestos is raised, establishments should:

- Take all necessary steps to investigate the circumstances

- Take corrective measures where appropriate
- Advise the employee of actions taken

5.2 Where a problem arises relating to the condition of asbestos-containing material on the premises or during work with an asbestos-containing material, employees should:

- Inform their supervisor or manager, immediately
- In the case of an accident or emergency, respond quickly to ensure effective treatment

6. Safe system of work

6.1 Asbestos is hazardous if asbestos fibres become airborne and are inhaled. The formation of airborne asbestos fibres can be prevented if asbestos and asbestos-containing materials in the premises are maintained in good condition and not damaged or disturbed (e.g. by workers' activities). This can be achieved by:

- Consulting with the Estates/Facilities Manager **before** carrying out any work (even small jobs such as installing computers or shelving) on the fabric of the premises.
- Carrying out a risk assessment before working on asbestos-containing materials.
- Following the written plan of work /method statement.
- Reporting any damage to, or deterioration of, asbestos-containing materials and any incidents that occur during work with asbestos.

7. Training

7.1 All employees who may encounter asbestos during the course of their work should be given the necessary training to be able to identify the situations in which asbestos may be present, to be able to recognise asbestos or similar suspect materials and to set out safe working practices to minimise risks to health and safety. The training should be proportionate to their needs and be refreshed at suitable intervals to maintain knowledge.

7.2 The training should include:

- The properties of asbestos and its effect on health (including the increased risk of lung cancer for those who smoke).
- The types, uses and likely occurrences of asbestos in buildings and plant (information on the various asbestos containing materials).
- The general procedures to be followed in an emergency – information and provision of emergency contact numbers.

- How to avoid the risks from exposure to asbestos and asbestos containing materials.
- Information on the asbestos management plan/processes and how to access the asbestos register if necessary.

8. Policy review

The implementation of this policy will be monitored through the Joint Health and Safety Committee.

9. Amendment history

Version	Date	Comments/Changes

BBSRC January 2016