What to do if you uncover or damage materials that may contain asbestos

Non-licensed tasks

This information will help employers and the self-employed to comply with the Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012.

It is also useful for trade union and employee safety representatives.

Only carry out work if you are properly trained and have the right equipment.

Remember:

- Asbestos fibres can cause lung cancer and lung diseases.
- Check it out before you start work.
- Read the safety checklist on the task sheet.

There are three ‘colours’ of asbestos, but you can’t tell just by the colour what you have found; it could be mixed with other ingredients which change the appearance.

Don’t assume there will always be warning signs. There could be undiscovered asbestos in buildings you work on.

Asbestos isn’t always obvious. Would you spot an asbestos gasket on an old engine, asbestos cement pipes or an asbestos-containing fuse-board? If you’re not sure, the premises owner needs to get it checked out!

Asbestos lagging on an old tank

Asbestos insulating board (AIB) fire surround

These asbestos cement pipes are labelled, so are the tiles, but you might not know until you start to lift them.

There could be sprayed limpet under this asbestos cement (AC) sheeting

What this sheet covers

This sheet shows some examples of where asbestos can be found. A chart describes what to do if you find asbestos materials during a job.

It also applies where asbestos materials get damaged by accident.
This guidance is issued by the Health and Safety Executive. Following the guidance is not compulsory and you are free to take other action. But if you do follow the guidance you will normally be doing enough to comply with the law. Health and safety inspectors seek to secure compliance with the law and may refer to this guidance as illustrating good practice.

**Procedures**

- Stop this work immediately.
- Follow the chart above or do a risk assessment to decide who must do the work - you may need a licensed contractor.
- Minimise the spread of contamination to other areas.
- Keep exposures as low as you can.
- Clean up the contamination.

![Diagram of procedures](image-url)