Asbestos - the greatest single cause of work related deaths in the UK

Introduction

Asbestos is a naturally occurring mineral that has been used for about 150 years on a large commercial scale. It is versatile, plentiful and ideal as a fire proofing and insulation material. Unfortunately it can also be deadly.

Asbestos related diseases (mesothelioma, asbestosis and lung cancer) are thought to kill up to 3,000 people a year, with this figure expected to rise to 10,000 by 2010. But those dying during that period will have already inhaled a fatal dose of asbestos fibres. It can take anywhere from 15 to 60 years after first exposure before the development of these fatal diseases.

These figures are a clear sign of what happens when such a risk is not managed. The HSE is determined not to allow a repetition of this mistake and through effective regulations ensure that in years to come no one is forced to endure the misery and suffering that asbestos related diseases cause.

This website provides outline details of the HSE’s new duty to manage the risk from asbestos in premises, developed specifically to address the current major health problem. Alongside this the site provides details of HSE’s significant supporting campaign aimed at promoting an awareness of the new legislation to a vast and complex audience.

The promotional strategy for the campaign relies heavily on others joining with the HSE and playing a key role in cascading the campaign messages - so read on to see how you can become a Partner, working with HSE in combating this fatal asbestos legacy.

Finally the website seeks to provide duty holders, and others with responsibilities under the proposed regulation, with information on the support that is available to assist them in their efforts to comply with the legal requirements. This information includes details of available and planned HSE guidance together with a diary of asbestos awareness/workshop events.

March 2001 saw the launch of Asbestos Campaign News with edition six having been issued in June 2002. As an integral part of our Campaign communication strategy the newsletter provides updates on matters relating to both the duty to
manage regulation and to the associated promotion campaign. The ‘News’ will continue to be posted on the Campaign website with individual copies being sent direct to HSE’s Partners.

The Duty to Manage

In August 2002 the Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations 2002 will introduce a duty to manage asbestos in premises (CAW). This important legislation tackles the biggest occupational health killer in the UK – asbestos-related disease. Of the 3,000 people currently dying each year from such diseases 25% have once worked in the building and maintenance trades and often would have worked unknowingly on or near to asbestos containing materials (ACMs).

The duty to manage will require those in control of premises to:

- take reasonable steps to determine the location and condition of materials likely to contain asbestos;
- presume materials contain asbestos unless there is strong evidence that they do not;
- make and keep an up to date record of the location and condition of the ACMs or presumed ACMs in the premises;
- assess the risk of the likelihood of anyone being exposed to fibres from these materials;
- prepare a plan setting out how the risks from the materials are to be managed;
- take the necessary steps to put the plan into action;
- review and monitor the plan periodically; and
- provide information on the location and condition of the materials to anyone who is liable to work on or disturb them.

HSE’s free leaflet ‘Managing asbestos in premises’ provides additional details of the proposed new duty.

In further support of the making of the new duty HSE is providing an Approved Code of Practice together with extended management guidance. Both of these publications are planned to be available in September 2002.

Related HSE guidance already available includes Asbestos Essentials, advising on minor maintenance work with asbestos materials, and MDHS 100 which provides technical guidance on surveying workplace premises for asbestos.

Also amongst HSE’s portfolio of Asbestos guidance is the hard hitting video ‘How are you today?’ In addition to providing an introduction to the requirements of the new duty to manage the video graphically portrays the health risks associated with asbestos.

All these priced publications are available through HSE Books.

Coming into force
The 'duty to manage asbestos' element of the CAW Regulations 2002, which is planned to be promoted through a media event at the British Library on 3Rd October 2002, will come into force in Spring 2004.

The Campaign

Although the duty to manage regulation will not bite until Spring 2004 getting the message out to the duty holders with responsibility for the estimated 1 million workplace premises which may contain asbestos is a major task, and one that needs to be addressed urgently. To this end the HSE has embarked on a five year campaign to promote awareness of and compliance with the new duty, with the first two years focusing very much on awareness raising initiatives. The Campaigns target audience is both vast and diverse. It became evident that to make any significant inroads into its ambitious programme the HSE would need to engage the support of others to cascade the campaign messages. In response to our plea for assistance some 800 organisations have currently committed themselves to joining the HSE as Partners in the campaign, with this number growing daily.

Asbestos workshops

HSE is looking to its Partners to organise and deliver a programme of Asbestos Workshops aimed at providing details of the requirements of the new legislation, together with practical help on the means of compliance, to those with responsibilities under the new duty. The events will be based on a package of material (the Presenter’s Pack) prepared by HSE.

Details of these events will be promoted through local marketing initiatives organised by Partners and nationally through the Asbestos Event’s Diary.

Presenters Pack

The boxed Presenter’s Pack referred to above comprises:

- Foreword by the Head of HSE’s Health Directorate, Sandra Caldwell
- details of how to use the Pack
- resource CD
- ‘How are you today?’ video
- leaflet INDG 163 'Five steps to risk assessment'
- leaflet INDG 223 'Managing asbestos in premises'
- order form for the printed version of associated Delegate Pack

The compact disc (CD) contains a PowerPoint slide presentation with supporting script and resource material for sessions on:

- the hazards of working with asbestos, including the ill-health effects
● the changes to the law
● how to work through the steps needed to comply with the new duty, using practical exercises as illustrations
● implementation arrangements
● further sources of advice and guidance
● The CD also contains a comprehensive set of supporting material for Workshop delegates.

The material has been prepared with flexibility in mind, reflecting the fact that the needs of audiences do vary, as do the needs of the presenters. It is also acknowledged that organisations may wish to introduce additional material; this is okay but we do ask that all the identified key messages within the HSE script remain intact and are included in the delivery to delegates.

Other HSE presentation material

Partners have identified alternative target groups that would benefit from asbestos awareness style events e.g. employees, contractors, client organisations as well as a more general audience seeking information on the new duty to manage. To meet this need the HSE has developed an alternative package of material (the Conference Pack) comprising PowerPoint slides and supporting script focusing primarily on the non-practical elements of the Presenter’s Pack; the video and Delegate Pack are not included.

Distribution arrangements

The issue of all the presentation material mentioned is restricted to those organisations that have registered with HSE as Campaign Partners.

For HSE's Partners submission of the completed 'Requisition Form' will trigger the distribution process which ends with the receipt of the Presenter's Pack from HSE's distributors; this could take up to 15 working days.

Other organisations have the opportunity of joining the ever growing network of Partners by providing us with their details, again through the use of the 'Requisition Form'. We will write to confirm registration as a Partner and arrange for the free initial copy of the Presenter's Pack to be issued.

The initial copy of the Presenter's Pack is issued free of charge; subsequent copies are available to Partners at a cost of £25 + VAT each. These additional copies can be ordered direct from HSE Books quoting the code MISC 455.

For the Conference Pack send your request to asbestos.campaign@hse.gsi.gov.uk. In this instance the material will be sent to you from the Asbestos Campaign Coordinator.

Promotion of Events

As will be explained within the Presenter’s Pack material, Partners will have the opportunity of utilising this Campaign website to promote their Asbestos awareness/workshop style events. Just submit the completed Promotion form to allowing us to give consideration to its inclusion in the Asbestos Event Diary. To enhance your entry why not include an electronic version of your organisation’s logo. Please send logo’s in gif or jpg format and no wider than 100 pixels. The online
feedback form will not accept images so please e-mail separately to asbestos.campaign@hse.gsi.gov.uk.

Attending Asbestos Events

HSE’s message to all of those with responsibilities under the new duty to manage asbestos is to address the issue now and not to wait ‘till the Spring of 2004 when the new Regulation comes into force; for many there is much to be done.

Mention has been made of the range of guidance available for duty holders to assist them in complying with the regulation; further help is being provided through a range of asbestos awareness seminars based on the new duty requirements.

From June 2002 events delivered by HSE’s network of partners will increase the awareness of responsibilities under the new duty. These events, based on HSE prepared material, will also include practical assistance on compliance.

You will need to keep an eye open for promotion of these events locally and through the HSE Asbestos Event Diary, which will be updated with event information received from Partners.