



National
Operational
Guidance

Control measure

Safe method of work: Asbestos



NFCC
National Fire
Chiefs Council

Developed and maintained by the NFCC



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Control measure knowledge

Asbestos can be found in any industrial or residential building built or refurbished before the year 2000. It was used in many of the common materials used in the building trade.

The presence of asbestos-containing material at an incident does not automatically mean that it will present a hazard. The following three step hazard identification process will assist the Incident Commander's initial risk assessment:

- Step 1 – are asbestos-containing materials present?
- Step 2 – can asbestos fibres be released or disturbed?
- Step 3 – do responders have to enter the hazard zone?

Once it has been established that asbestos is involved at an incident, fire and rescue services must comply with a method of work that has been agreed with the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). This is to enable fire and rescue services to comply with an exemption to work with asbestos without providing 14 days notice to the HSE. The work method is set out in A foundation for hazardous materials.

Strategic actions

Fire and rescue services should:

- Comply with the Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012/Control of Asbestos (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2012
- Provide arrangements for medical surveillance of personnel following incidents involving asbestos (by an appointed doctor), where appropriate
- Ensure operational policy reflects all aspects of the agreed method of work
- Provide procedures and support arrangements for identifying asbestos-containing materials

Tactical actions

Incident commanders should:

- Comply with the conditions detailed in the Exemption Certificate from CAR 12 Asbestos Licensing and Notification Requirements
- Ensure a suitable method of work has been agreed with the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) prior to attending incidents involving asbestos-containing materials (for example, the method statement proposed in CFOA circular 2014-03)
- Identify the presence of asbestos-containing materials and assess the level of risk (High or Lower Hazard)
- Avoid disturbing or releasing asbestos materials wherever possible
- Avoid committing responders into areas that may lead to contamination with asbestos if possible
- Follow the three-step asbestos hazard identification process
- If entering the hazard area follow HSE agreed method of working with asbestos-containing materials
- Identify the presence of asbestos containing materials and assess the level of risk (High or Low Hazard)