

HSG 264: The Survey Guide

What it means for clients, dutyholders and building professionals

Background

HSG264 Asbestos: The Survey Guide is aimed at people carrying out asbestos surveys and those people who have specific responsibilities for managing asbestos in non-domestic premises under regulation 4 the Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012 as well as providing guidance for other situations where asbestos surveys may be required eg. managing asbestos in domestic premises or requirements under the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2007.

Whilst this guidance is primarily aimed at surveyors carrying out asbestos surveys and people commissioning asbestos surveys (eg. clients/dutyholders), it will also be useful to building professionals, such as architects, designers and building surveyors who need to be aware of the requirement to carry out asbestos building surveys and who may advise on the need for an asbestos survey before refurbishment and demolition projects.

For surveyors HSG264 specifies the methodology to use in carrying out surveys and how to report and present the results. Advice is given as to how to recognise and sample suspected asbestos containing materials (ACMs).

A specific section is also included which outlines the survey strategy to use when surveying large numbers of similar properties (eg. domestic housing). For people commissioning surveys i.e. Clients and Dutyholders, it provides details of how to ensure that the survey is appropriate, that it is carried out by competent people, and upon completion is valid, accurate and fit for purpose.

The key points affecting people like yourself who may commission/advise on the need for an asbestos surveys are as follows:

1. Competence of the surveyor and quality procedures

The client or dutyholder should not appoint a surveyor unless they can prove they are competent.

- HSE strongly recommends the use of accredited (UKAS) or certified surveyors.
- Minimum requirements for a surveyor are BOHS P402 qualification, six months' full-time experience under supervision and proof of competence through auditing.
- Surveyors should have an adequate quality management system in place.

The dutyholder must make sure that adequate time and resources are made available to the surveyors should be able to demonstrate independence, impartiality and integrity. The dutyholder must make sure that adequate time and resources are made available to the surveyor to allow a thorough survey to be carried out.

2. Asbestos surveys

Two types of survey are available:

Management survey

Standard survey used to locate ACMs (as far as is reasonably practicable) which could be damaged or disturbed during normal occupancy.

Refurbishment and demolition survey

Needed before any refurbishment or demolition is carried out. Used to locate all ACMs (as far as is reasonably practicable) where refurbishment is taking place or in the whole building in the case of demolition.

Survey restrictions and caveats (whether imposed by the client or surveyor) should only be included if absolutely necessary as they can seriously undermine the management of asbestos in buildings.

3. Survey planning

The client/dutyholder now needs to play a more active role in the planning of the survey. A sufficient exchange of information is required with the surveyor so that both parties clearly understand what is required. Typical information requirements are as follows:

Information the surveyor needs from the client/dutyholder

- Details of buildings or parts of buildings to be surveyed and survey type(s).
- Details of building(s) use, processes, hazards, priority areas.
- Plans, documents, reports and surveys on design, structure and construction.
- Safety and security information: fire alarm testing, special clothing areas (eg. food production).
- Access arrangements and permits.
- Contacts for operational or health and safety issues.

Information the client/dutyholder should expect from the surveyor

- Surveyor(s) identity, qualifications, accreditation or certification status, quality control procedures.
- References from previous work.
- Insurance (professional indemnity cover).
- Costs.
- Proposed scope of work.
- Plan of work, including plans for sampling or asbestos disturbance.
- Timetable.
- Details of caveats.
- Report, including areas not accessed/not surveyed).

The client needs to consider why the survey is needed, what type of survey is needed, what information the surveyor must provide and what format the report will be in.