

Types of Asbestos Survey

Background

Those responsible for the management of asbestos in buildings including building owners, managing agents and employers need to be clear on the type of asbestos survey required, where and when the survey is needed, and the information required. This information will also be of interest to architects, surveyors and those involved in property development and refurbishment.

The purpose of the survey is to help manage asbestos in the dutyholder's premises. It must provide sufficient information to allow an asbestos register to be prepared, an appropriate risk assessment to be carried out and an asbestos management plan to be written to manage the risks resulting from the presence of any ACMs. The survey undertaken must:

- As far as reasonably practicable locate and record the location, extent and product type of any presumed or known ACMs.
- Inspect and record information on the accessibility, condition and surface treatment of any presumed or known ACMs.
- Determine and record the asbestos type, either by collecting representative samples of suspect materials for laboratory identification, or by making a presumption based on the product type and its appearance etc.
- There are two types of survey relating to asbestos containing materials (ACMs): a Management Survey and a Refurbishment or Demolition Survey.

Management Survey

A Management Survey is the standard type of survey required to locate as far as is reasonably practicable and determine the extent of any suspect ACMs present which could be damaged or disturbed during normal occupancy, including foreseeable maintenance and installation. The condition of the ACMs and their ability to release fibres into the air should also be assessed.

The survey will involve sampling and analysis to confirm the presence of asbestos and may as a result entail minor intrusive work and some disturbance. The amount involved will depend on the type of building, the nature of its construction etc.

Asbestos can alternatively be presumed to be present. However presuming the presence of asbestos may result in additional cost and time delays as it may only defer the need for sampling and analysis until a later date such as at a time when any work is carried out.

It is advised to carry out sampling and analysis to ascertain whether any presumed materials positively identify as asbestos prior to undertaking any work, as any work carried out on presumed materials would need to involve appropriate contractors and work methods in compliance with the Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012 irrespective of whether the material was actually an ACM or not.

Refurbishment and Demolition Survey

A Refurbishment and Demolition survey is required before any refurbishment or demolition work is carried out. This survey will locate and describe as far as is reasonably practicable, all ACMs in the area where the refurbishment will take place or the whole building if demolition is planned. A Refurbishment and Demolition survey may also be required in circumstances such as when more intrusive maintenance and repair work is being carried out.

The survey will be fully intrusive and will involve destructive inspection as necessary, to gain access to all areas, including those areas that may be difficult to reach. It may involve lifting carpets and tiles, breaking through walls, ceilings, cladding and partitioning. Controls will need to be put in place to prevent the spread of debris which may include asbestos.

Refurbishment and Demolition Surveys should only be conducted in unoccupied areas to minimise the risk of exposure to employees or the public. In ideal circumstances the building should not be in service and all furnishings removed. There may be some circumstances where the building is still in use at the time the survey is carried out. In the educational sector for example, refurbishment and demolition surveys may be conducted in schools or colleges during school holidays.

For minor refurbishment, this only applies to the room involved or even part of the room where the survey only covers a small area of a large room. In these situations, there should be effective isolation of the survey area and all furnishings should be removed as far as possible or protected using sheeting.

The survey area must be shown to be fit for reoccupation before people move back in. This will require a thorough visual inspection and if appropriate, air sampling. Once again the surveyed area will need to be effectively identified and shown to be fit for reoccupation before any staff or students are allowed back into the area.