

Work Safe

BABERGH'S HEALTH & SAFETY NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 1

Firth's Focus



Malcolm Firth
Head of
Environmental
Services

Welcome to the first issue of Babergh District Council's **Work Safe**. The aim of the newsletter is to keep local employers up to date with health and safety legislation and best practice.

Of course, all good employers take care of their staff and not just because legislation demands it. However, even good employers need to be kept up-to-date with the changing expectations and requirements placed on them. In this issue we look at the implications of the Health & Safety Executive's 'duty to manage' regulation, with especial reference to employees working with asbestos. There are also features on what to do if an accident occurs in your work place and a

piece about the HSE's new priorities for local authorities such as Babergh.

We look forward to your feedback as to how useful you found this issue of **Work Safe**. Please see contact details on page 4. We aim to publish it on a regular basis and it would help us to know your thoughts as to how it can provide you with even more relevant and timely information.

Malcolm Firth

Revitalising Health & Safety

In June 2000, the Health & Safety Commission (HSC) and John Prescott, the Deputy Prime Minister, launched the *Revitalising Health and Safety Statement*.

The aims of this document are:

- to inject new impetus into the health and safety agenda;
- to identify new approaches to reduce the rates of accidents and ill health caused by work;
- to ensure that our approach is relevant to the changing world of work over the next 25 years;
- to gain maximum benefit from

links between occupational health and safety and other government programmes.

One of the keys to the success of this national initiative is to engage small firms and address the



difficulty they have in understanding their legal duties and what

action they should take.

The document provides a new framework for tackling health and safety, focusing on national targets for reducing work-related injury and ill-health. The targets are to:

- reduce the number of working days lost per 100,000 workers from work related injury and ill health by 30% by 2010;
- reduce the incidence rate of fatal and major injury incidents by 10% by 2010;
- reduce the incidence rate of cases of work related ill

(continued on page 2)

Asbestos - Managing the Matter

Did you know that half a million UK premises are thought to contain asbestos? Equally, were you aware that an estimated 4,000 British workers could die from an asbestos related disease, mainly because they are unknowingly working on asbestos containing material?

Building and maintenance workers such as electricians and plumbers are the largest



group of workers at risk of exposure to asbestos, according to research by

Professor Julian Peto and Health and Safety Executive experts. A quarter of people dying from an asbestos related disease have worked in those trades during their working life. Unless asbestos is known to be in a building, and that knowledge is passed on to maintenance workers at risk, exposure to asbestos will continue.

In response to this, the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) has developed a new regulation to require asbestos to be managed in non-domestic premises. Called the "duty to manage", the regulation is included in the Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations 2002, but does not become law until 21 May 2004.

Here *Work Safe* examines the regulation – and what it means for you as a local business.

Why has the HSE issued another regulation?

Up to 500 000 commercial, industrial and public buildings in the UK are likely to contain asbestos materials. Unless this material is properly managed, building and maintenance workers may breathe in harmful asbestos fibres when carrying out everyday jobs. Breathing in air containing asbestos fibres can lead to serious illnesses, mainly cancers of the lungs and chest linings.

What buildings are affected?

All non-domestic buildings, whatever type of business is carried out in them. It also covers the common areas of residential rented properties, including halls, stairwells, and lift shafts.

Which materials may contain asbestos?

Sprayed coatings, lagging material, insulating board, ceiling tiles, textiles and ropes, paper, felts and cardboard, asbestos cement, decorative

textural coatings e.g. Artex, and vinyl floor coverings.

Who is responsible?

The dutyholder is anyone responsible for maintaining and repairing all or part of a property, or who has control of the building. For example, the occupier or the owner.

Will the regulation affect me?

If you control or have information about the building, you must co-operate with the dutyholder. For instance, landlords must pass on relevant information to new tenants, and leaseholders must allow access for inspection by managing agents.

When will this come into effect?

Although the regulation doesn't become law until 21 May 2004, you need to start work now on managing the risk from asbestos in order to save lives later.

What do I need to do?

Everyone must start to take action now – even if all you have to do is to co-operate with the dutyholder.

If you are a dutyholder you **must**:

- find out whether your building contains asbestos, and what condition it's in;
- assess the risk, e.g. is it likely to release fibres;
- make a plan to manage that risk.

Where do I start?

- Do a desk top study to check out what you already know about your buildings, e.g. look at plans and other documents.
- Contact anyone else who may already have useful information about the building, e.g. a surveyor, architect or contractor who knows the building.
- Carry out an inspection of the building. You can do this yourself, especially if you simply assume materials contain asbestos. Or use an independent expert if samples have to be analysed.
- Record the results of the inspection, identifying the parts of the building where asbestos may be located.
- Assess the risk of asbestos fibres being released into the air from the materials in those areas. Take into account what



condition the materials are in and how likely they are to be damaged or disturbed.

- Draw up a management plan. State which areas, if any, need asbestos to be sealed, encapsulated or, as a last resort, removed. The key part of the plan is to warn people

coming to work on the building to prevent accidental exposure.

- Build in regular checks to make sure the condition of materials has not deteriorated. Concentrate on areas of high risk where materials are more likely to get damaged.
- Keep the management plan up to date to show any changes that could affect the risk.

Remember, the new legal duty is about managing any asbestos in a building, not about removing all asbestos!

Asbestos in good condition and not likely to be disturbed should not be removed. Removal may be unnecessary and costly!

What shouldn't I do?

- Don't panic – asbestos is only dangerous when disturbed. If it is safely managed and contained it doesn't present a health hazard.
- Don't remove asbestos unnecessarily. Removing it can be more dangerous than simply containing it.
- Don't treat all asbestos materials the same. You only need use an asbestos licenced contractor to work on high risk materials, such as pipe insulation or asbestos insulating panels – not asbestos cement which is much less dangerous.
- Don't assume you need to bring in a specialist in every case. The regulation allows

(Revitalising Health & Safety continued from page 1)

health by 20% by 2010;

- achieve half of each improvement target by 2004.

To achieve these challenging targets the HSC has asked local authorities to focus their activities on the following priority hazards:

- falls from height;
- workplace transport;
- musculoskeletal disorders;
- stress;
- slips and trips.

Officers from Babergh's Commercial Team will be focusing on these key priorities during their

routine inspection of businesses and when responding to complaints and accident notifications. For more information on the Council's health & safety service, please visit our website at www.babergh.gov.uk

you to inspect your own building and assume materials contain asbestos.

- Don't forget that the regulation is all about protecting maintenance workers and others from asbestos fibres, so concentrate on practical steps to achieve this.

Where can I get more information?

You can get the following guides from HSE Books on 01787 881165:

- The management of asbestos in non-domestic premises. Approved Code of Practice (L127)
- A short guide to managing asbestos in premises (INDG 223rev3)
- A comprehensive guide to managing asbestos in premises (HSG 227)

Other useful contacts:

- HSE infoline: 08701 545500
- HSE's asbestos campaign web page : www.hse.gov.uk



ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

Printed by Keith Avis Printers and published by Babergh District Council

Contact Details

If you have any feedback on this publication, or any other matter, please do not hesitate to contact us on:

Telephone (01473) 825888
or email
worksafe@babergh.gov.uk

Accident at Your Workplace? How to Report it to Babergh

Reporting certain accidents and ill health at work is a legal requirement. The information provided enables the enforcing authorities, either Babergh or the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) depending upon your



business, to identify where and how incidents arise and to investigate serious accidents. The enforcing authority can help and advise you on preventive action to reduce injury, ill health and accidental loss, much of which is uninsurable.

As **Work Safe** is aimed at businesses on our database, Babergh is your enforcing authority.

When do I need to act?

You need to report:

- deaths
- major injuries
- some diseases contracted at work
- some dangerous occurrences
- accidents resulting in employees unable to do their usual work for 3 or more days

These are all defined in the Reporting of Injuries, Disease and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) of 1995. Please contact Babergh's Commercial Health Team on (01473) 825888 if you are unsure as to what should be reported.

Who do I report to?

All accidents, diseases and dangerous occurrences should be reported to the Incident Contact Centre. The Contact Centre was established on 1st April 2001 as a single point of contact for receiving all incidents in the UK.

You can report incidents to the Incident Contact Centre by any of the following routes:

Telephone: 0845 3009923 (8.30am - 5pm)
Web: www.riddor.gov.uk
Email: riddor@natbrit.com
Facsimile: 0845 3009924
By post: by completing the relevant hardcopy form F2508 or F2508A and sending to:-
**Incident Contact Centre
Caerphilly Business Park
Caerphilly CF83 3GG**

The Incident Contact Centre will forward details of incidents to Babergh. However, you may still report the incident to us.

More information is available on the HSE website (www.hse.gov.uk) or contact the Commercial Health Team at Babergh on (01473) 825888