



DAC Guidance Asbestos in churches

Asbestos is the biggest single cause of work-related deaths in the UK. Although most Church of England churches were constructed or restored before asbestos was used in construction, the risk is not high. Nevertheless, some churches do contain asbestos, perhaps in connection with twentieth-century extensions or alterations, heating systems, pipe lagging, organ blowers or roofing materials.

The management of asbestos in buildings is regulated by law. The principal duty that affects churches is the making of a suitable and sufficient assessment as to whether asbestos is or is liable to be present in the premises. In making the assessment:

- steps that are reasonable in the circumstances shall be taken;
- the condition of any asbestos which is, or has been assumed to be, present in the premises shall be considered;
- account must be taken of building plans and of relevant information and the age of the premises;
- parts of the premises which are reasonably accessible shall be inspected;
- the assessment must be reviewed if there is reason to suspect that the assessment is no longer valid, or if there has been a significant change in the premises.

Where the assessment shows that asbestos is or is liable to be in the premises:

- a determination of the risk from that asbestos must be made;
- a written plan identifying the parts of the premises concerned must be prepared;
- the measures to be taken for managing the risk must be prepared;
- the measures specified in the plan shall be adequate for monitoring condition, ensuring proper maintenance or removal, ensuring that information about the location and condition of asbestos is provided to every person liable to disturb it, and to the emergency services. The dutyholder must record the measures taken to implement the plan; and review it at regular intervals.

Further details on the management of asbestos is available from the [Health and safety Executive](#).

In the church context, the dutyholder is the PCC.

These regulations have been in place since 2006, so it is likely that the church will already have an asbestos survey. If not, the HSE guidance says that where premises are small and there is no maintenance work planned, it may be appropriate for the dutyholder to carry out their own assessment inspection. However, if maintenance or repair work is planned, a suitably trained person should be employed. Discuss a suitable way forward with the inspecting architect/surveyor.

The Diocese's policy for Churches and Church Halls is that the PCC (being the body responsible for repairs and maintenance of these buildings) should follow the advice of its Insurer (usually Ecclesiastical) and take steps to carry out risk assessments, including an asbestos management survey. Ecclesiastical provides its advice in the Risk Management Report on Church Buildings.

Information taken from Churchcare web-site : www.churchcare.co.uk

This document is issued under the authority of the Bristol Diocesan Advisory Committee for the Care of Churches. It may be copied by parishes for use by clergy, churchwardens, the PCC and other proper officers. Permission to copy for other users must be obtained from the Secretary of the DAC.