



## Asbestos in Church Buildings

The Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations 2002 now applies to churches.

The Regulations place a duty on persons having responsibility for non-domestic premises to make a suitable and sufficient assessment as to whether asbestos is or is liable to be present in 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- The assessment must be reviewed if there is reason to suspect that the assessment is no longer valid, or if there has been a significant change in the premises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 action 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 duty holder must record the measures taken to implement the plan; and review it at regular intervals.

Since the vast majority of Church of England churches were either constructed or restored before asbestos was used in construction, the overall risk may not be as high as for other classes of buildings. Nevertheless, some churches contain asbestos; heating systems, pipe lagging, organ blowers, roofing materials etc. A number of churches, perhaps those constructed or restored in the twentieth century, or in an historic building with lagging in the heating system, may contain significant asbestos. It is important, therefore, that the response is proportionate to the risk.

Where action in response to the regulations is taken, those undertaking the assessment should study the published advice, take into account issues such as the overall age of the building, the dates of building programmes, when services were installed, as well as information available from the Quinquennial Inspection report. They should then survey the building with these factors in mind. Some building materials such as glass, bricks and stone do not contain asbestos. However, materials used in the twentieth century may well contain asbestos, and an assumption must be made that materials do contain asbestos unless there is evidence to suggest they do not.

If the PCC has not yet done an assessment, who should undertake it? As a matter of urgency the PCC should contact the church architect for advice on an appropriate person to undertake the task.

Sources of further advice are:

Health and Safety Executive:

General information on asbestos: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/index.htm>

*A comprehensive guide to managing asbestos in premises* (HSG 227) price £12.50 (or a free downloadable pdf version is available from <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/priced/hsg227.pdf>)

*Managing and working with asbestos* (Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012 - Approved Code of Practice and guidance) price £15.00 (or a free downloadable pdf version is available from <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg223.pdf>)

The publications are available from HSE Books on <http://books.hse.gov.uk/hse/public/home.jsf> or

The Regulations are available from <http://www.hms0.gov.uk>