

PLANNING DIRECTORATE ESTATES DEPARTMENT

Report:

Report No.

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Reference:

INTRODUCTION

This report is an evaluation of the management of asbestos in ABMU Health Board and its former Trusts and Authorities.

The report is evidence based using current and archived documents to establish asbestos events, practice and knowledge.

In judging decisions and actions at any point in time it must be appreciated that regulations and opinion regarding asbestos has evolved over the years. A short history of the regulations will help illustrate this point and explain poor standards of past asbestos removal.

It was known in 1968 that Mesothelioma was related to asbestos exposure and the first asbestos regulations in 1969 set no exposure standards as we have today.

In 1970 there was a voluntary ban on the import of raw crocidolite (blue asbestos), this was followed in 1980 by a further voluntary ban on the import of raw amosite (brown asbestos).

It was not until 1983 that the asbestos licensing regulations were introduced regulating the standards of the asbestos industry. In the asbestos prohibition regulations were enacted banning the installation of asbestos insulation, asbestos spraying, and the importation, use and supply of crocidolite and amosite.

The control of asbestos at work regulations 1987 set control limits and action levels for asbestos fibres.

1992 saw an amendment to the regulations reducing the control limits and action levels.

The asbestos licensing regulations were updated in 1993 to include AIB (asbestos insulation board) into licensed work. The control of asbestos at work regulations 1998 further reduced control limits and action levels, introduced the requirement to have UKAS accreditation and extended regulations to cover any

worker likely to be exposed to asbestos, including those in building and maintenance trades.

In the UK the Asbestos (Prohibitions) (Amendment) Regulations 1999 banned the use and import of all asbestos containing materials.

The 2002 Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations further reduced the risk of exposure to asbestos through; the introduction of the Duty to Manage asbestos in non-domestic premises. This Duty to Manage placed an onus on all controllers of properties to manage the risk posed by all asbestos under their control. The result of this led to widespread pre-emptive asbestos surveys.

The Control of Asbestos Regulations 2006 implemented a control limit of 0.1 f/ml for all types of asbestos.

Control of Asbestos Regulations (CAR) 2012; The biggest change affected the current "Non-Licensable" work on asbestos.

The "Non-Licensable" category have been split into two and an additional category created which is termed "Notifiable Non-Licensable Work" (NNLW). This now sits between the current "Non-Licensable" and "Licensable" categories.

Works that fall into this category must be: notified, each worker exposed must have medical surveillance every three years and the employer must maintain a register for each worker of the type and duration of work done with asbestos - to be kept for 40 years along with copies of all medicals.

REPORT

Asbestos issues were firstly raised by West Glamorgan Health Authority during 1976.

West Glamorgan Health Authority documented the discovery of blue asbestos (crocidolite) in Singleton Hospital during early 1976.

From 29th March 1976 onward documentation established that the HSE and trades unions were informed and involved with process of dealing with the problems arising. The press also published articles related to the asbestos. At that time opinion on asbestos was considerably different to that of today, however there was a concern for the adverse health effects of asbestos exposure particularly Mesothelioma.

Statistics quoted at the time suggested that asbestos related disease was uncommon and very rare.

Typically 75 deaths in 1974 attributed to asbestosis, lung cancer deaths complicated by cigarette smoking and Mesothelioma deaths 69 in 1974.

A quote at the time from the Area Medical Officer (30/04/76) in referring to Mesothelioma "It is a very rare disease" and "Asbestos remains a very useful material if used sensibly and kept in good order".

The area administrator confirmed in a press release dated 30/04/76 that "checking in other hospitals is continuing..." A Singleton Hospital Staff Information Leaflet No. 136 regarding blue asbestos.

This unfortunate event had the positive benefit at the time of raising asbestos awareness of all staff throughout the Health Authority.

At the time of this incident the asbestos regulations had no set standard other than exposure must be less than to cause injury. A very difficult case to argue at the time considering the long incubation period for asbestos related disease. In November of 1976 the Welsh Office issued a memo to all Area Works Officers Wales. The memo gave basic advice on working with asbestos but also noted that the Asbestos Regulations 1969 and the Health and Safety at Work act are mandatory to all Crown premises including Health Buildings. The memo noted employer's duties to ensure employees are aware of all the dangers associated with asbestos.

In July 1983 a memo sent to all wards, departments and consultants informed staff that residual asbestos had been found again in Singleton voids.

The Welsh Office issued a safety information bulleting in March of 1984 giving revised guidance on asbestos in NHS premises. Notable information relates to HSE Introduction of control limits, licensing for asbestos contractors, Information for safety representatives regarding asbestos in premises and the hazards and training and the availability of courses to be held at Falfield from April 1984.

On the 30th March 1984 a memo from Chief Administrative Works Officer, West Glamorgan Health Authority contained an instruction to Unit Works Officers to ensure that no asbestos or asbestos containing materials are used on Health Authority premises.

Void entry procedure for Singleton Hospital circa 1984.

Memo of 16th April 1984 confirming that blue asbestos identified at Morrision Hospital was being removed.

Memo of 9th August 1984 from the District Safety Adviser, West Glamorgan Health Authority, Procedure on discovery of asbestos.

Memo of 20th December 1984 from the District Safety Adviser, West Glamorgan Health Authority, Revised safe working procedure and role specification.

Asbestos register for WGHA sites circa 1985

Memo of 7th April 1988 from the District Safety Adviser, West Glamorgan Health Authority, Revised safe working procedure and role specification.

Memo of 7th April 1988 from the District Safety Adviser, West Glamorgan Health Authority, Control of Asbestos at Work regulations 1987 and EH10 (asbestos exposure limits).

Warning notice of 17th January 1993 regarding the presence of asbestos at Bridgend general Hospital, Nurses Hostel, Quarella Road and Maesteg General Hospital.

Letter to the Legal Officer of 29th May 1992 from the Staff Representative regarding the inaccuracies of the asbestos register for Ogwr Health Unit “we have been deliberately misled as to the presence of asbestos in the areas mentioned”. The letter also containing a list of employees of Ogwr Health Unit who have worked in areas where asbestos has been located and a list of areas at Bridgend General Hospital where asbestos has been located.

Training

Records of asbestos training can be verified from 2005 onwards in the former Swansea NHS Trust. In 2006 certain contractors were also included in the in-house asbestos training. In 2009 training was carried out for Estates Staff at Glanrhyd, Princess of Wales and Unit 32 Baglan. The training included for selected staff respirator fit testing, decontamination and gasket replacement procedures in accordance with the HSE asbestos essentials for non-licensed asbestos work.

Survey History

West Glamorgan Health Authority had asbestos surveys carried out in 1985.

CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

Crown Immunity removed from NHS Trusts in 1990.

David Crabbe
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APPENDIX 1

Asbestos Regulations Since 1969

APPENDIX 2

Document reference list