

BOHS Statement on Exposure to Asbestos in Public Buildings

The British Occupational Hygiene Society (BOHS) is a learned and professional society with the objects of improving scientific knowledge and practice in the prevention of ill health from occupational and environmental hazard, with members drawn from a wide range of multidisciplinary specialities and including leading researchers and practitioners. The organisation includes the Faculty of Occupational Hygiene which provides examinations and qualifications in occupational hygiene. Our publication, the Annals of Occupational Hygiene, is acknowledged as one of the leading global scientific journals in the field.

Low level exposure to asbestos in public buildings: assessing and addressing the risks

Prolonged exposure to asbestos at work can lead to diseases such as mesothelioma and lung cancer. There is a less clear picture about the effects of low level 'non occupational' asbestos exposure but some concern that it most probably presents a higher risk for young people compared with older adults. At BOHS we are concerned to ensure the control of asbestos exposure at work and in the community. There is an urgent need for better understanding of low level exposures in public buildings such as schools and a requirement to ensure effective control.

BOHS has been, and continues to be, active in managing and preventing exposure to asbestos at work, and our involvement goes back many years to the development of the first British exposure standards in the 1960s. Our scientific journal, the Annals of Occupational Hygiene, has always been one of the main vehicles for researchers in this field to publish their work.

We remain active in seeking to reduce and manage the risks from asbestos. Examples include the publication of research papers in the Annals, the fostering of debate, the dissemination of the science, latest views and practice at our conferences, seminars and workshops, and, most recently, through the launch of the ABICS scheme for certifying the competency of individual asbestos surveyors. These are important requirements for the effective understanding and control of the risks of exposure to asbestos.

We support the need for research into the treatment and cure of asbestos-related diseases; however, our primary concern as a Society is the prevention and control of exposure to hazardous substances. In this context we therefore stress the specific need for research that enables a better understanding of the effects of low-level exposure to asbestos and the means of preventing asbestos related disease.

Disclaimer

The views in the document provide a considered opinion of the issues as they relate to the objects of the Society. They may not necessarily coincide with the views of individual members or their employing organisations. This document is not intended to convey any legal interpretation.

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