

Written evidence from Asbestos Register (ASB0031)

Terms of Reference – this submission specifically relates to the following terms of reference.

Does HSE keep adequate records of asbestos in public buildings ?

Is HSE making best use of available technology and systems to monitor the safety of asbestos which remains in buildings ?

Submission

As I understand it, the HSE keeps no records of asbestos in buildings, public or otherwise.

But if it did or better still if it could obtain access to such records with little effort and no cost, this would probably do more to focus the attention of those responsible (the 'dutyholder') for the safety of asbestos in buildings than any other single measure.

There are many organisations that hold data on asbestos in their own buildings and there are companies in the property / facilities / asbestos management sectors that hold such data on behalf their clients.

This data is most often drawn from asbestos surveys carried out by 3rd party professional Asbestos Surveyors, who may or may not be accredited by the UK Accreditation Service as recommended by the HSE.

The data generated by surveys is recorded on bespoke software which they use to generate reports in a proprietary format.

There are a finite number of software packages in use and the data from them can be linked to our database – our aim being to create a national database no less.

This is not a new idea – we have been working towards that goal since AsbestosRegister.com was first launched in 2001. And with support from the HSE, RICS, the property industry as well as the TUC and UCATT, we have been growing ever since.

To achieve this, we have had to overcome numerous issues; property owners fearful of blighting their properties by making this information 'public', reluctance of asbestos surveyors to share their clients' data, recovery of operating costs, etc.

We have found elegant solutions to these and many other issues.

Would we be prepared to share our data with the HSE at no cost to them ?

Yes, and if HSE were prepared to assist us with further support, I believe we could achieve our goal of an asbestos record for every public, commercial and social housing property in the UK within 5 years.

In short, bringing all the existing and future data together in a single source has many advantages for all stakeholders. Potentially it could even afford HSE the opportunity to monitor compliance with Regulation 4 – the duty to manage asbestos – in a more efficient and cost-effective manner.

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