

Wilkins Safety Group

Weekly Update Newsletter



Welcome to this issue - Friday 28th October 2011 - of our Update Newsletter

Please feel free to forward this newsletter to colleagues and friends.

###

You, the Environment and Occupational Diseases.

The range of **Occupational Diseases** in the workplace can cause major headaches for most employers, unfortunately many employers are totally unaware of what is classified as an Occupational Disease under the HSE guidelines, they are also very unaware of the effect their activities has on the environment and controlling disease.



The areas we will consider here are Asbestos, Leptospirosis, and Site Waste. BUT THERE ARE MANY OTHER AREAS YOU SHOULD CONSIDER

Asbestos



Arrangements for Managing Asbestos in the Workplace Premises

Asbestos-containing materials within the premises must be managed to prevent the release of asbestos fibres into the air that can be inhaled by employees and others who may be present in the workplace.

Survey

The premises must be surveyed to determine whether asbestos-containing materials are present. It should be presumed that materials contain asbestos unless there is strong evidence to the contrary.

The amount and condition of the asbestos-containing material needs to be assessed and measures identified to ensure that airborne asbestos fibres are not present or formed in the workplace.

Control of Access to Asbestos-containing Materials

Access to asbestos-containing materials in the premises must be controlled so as to prevent inadvertent disturbance of the material and the release of asbestos fibres. A plan or register showing the location of all asbestos-containing materials and presumed asbestos-containing materials should be made available.

Systems should be put in place to ensure that anyone liable to disturb asbestos-containing materials is made aware of their location.

The condition of all asbestos-containing materials or materials suspected of containing asbestos should be inspected at agreed intervals to ascertain that there has been no damage or deterioration. Where damage or deterioration is found the asbestos-containing material will be reassessed and repaired or removed as appropriate.

Arrangements for Controlling Work on Asbestos in the Workplace Premises

Any work on, or removal of, asbestos-containing materials must be controlled to ensure that adequate precautions are taken to prevent the release of asbestos fibres.

Work with asbestos and asbestos-containing materials is to be carried out by a licensed contractor (licensed by the HSE) unless the work is exempted from the requirement for licensing.

When contractors are engaged to work on the premises, adequate steps will be taken to ensure the contractors are competent and have sufficient skills and knowledge to do the job safely and without risks to health.

Only contractors licensed by the HSE will be used for the removal of asbestos-containing materials, unless the work involves the removal of materials in which:

- asbestos fibres are firmly linked in a matrix
- the exposure during the removal process is likely to be sporadic or of low intensity.

Contractors hired to carry out building or allied trade work that will involve minor work with asbestos must comply with the Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations 2006.

Summary

Asbestos is hazardous in the form of airborne fibres, but employees will not be affected by it if they do not disturb asbestos-containing materials. Employees can prevent inadvertent exposure to asbestos if they:

- consult their supervisor before carrying out any work that might disturb asbestos-containing material in any part of the building
- follow the written plan and use the control measures that are in place when carrying out any work that will disturb asbestos
- report any damage to, or deterioration of, any asbestos-containing material.

###

Leptospirosis or Weil's Disease



About 50 – 70% of all rats in the UK are carriers of this disease.

The bacteria can enter the human body via damaged skin (such as cuts and abrasions) or mucus membranes (mouth and nose). Infection can also result from direct contact with rodent carcasses, tissue and organs.

Leptospirosis is one of the major bacteria with which rats can live quite happily. Rats contract leptospirosis while still pups, and carry it in their kidneys. They excrete the bacterium through their urine into the environment, where it can survive for up to 45 days in fresh water or in damp conditions, such as muddy river banks. However, the bacterium cannot multiply outside the body of the rat.

Who is at risk?

Groups most at risk have historically included farm workers and those whose jobs bring them into regular contact with rats. (e.g. electricians, plumbers and drainage workers)

What are the symptoms?

The onset of symptoms may be gradual or sudden and display all the signs of a severe influenza. The victim suffers from an acute headache, combined with muscular pains and a general feeling of weakness.

In acute cases left untreated, jaundice becomes intense and urine passage difficult, with solid bodies forming in the kidneys. Renal failure and kidney damage occurs simultaneously and death might follow.

Distress

The presence of pest infestation, such as by rodents may cause physiological stress in some people. The presence of pests is not conducive to a pleasant and productive working environment.

The Law

The Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949 requires the occupier of any land or buildings to notify the local authority of any rodent infestation (not applicable to agricultural land). The occupier may also be liable for any treatments and repair work required, along with removal of harbourages. This Act also requires local authorities to take steps to ensure that their district is kept free from rats and mice.

Under the **Health & Safety at Work Act 1974** employers have a legal obligation to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of employees. The presence of an infestation could result in unsafe working conditions.

The Food Safety (General Food Hygiene) Regulations 1995, require that food shall not be exposed to risk of contamination and that food rooms be kept in good repair and condition to prevent the risk of pest infestation.

The Food Safety Act 1990 makes it an offence to sell food which is unfit or contains foreign bodies, e.g. droppings or insect fragments. Furthermore, food premises with a serious pest problem could face closure procedures under the Food Safety Act. The loss of business in such instances can be considerable.

###

Site Waste Management Plans (SWMP) for the construction industry



What are Site Waste Management Plans?

Site Waste Management Plans (SWMP) aim to reduce the amount of waste produced on construction sites and prevent fly-tipping.

Who do the SWMP affect?

The SWMP proposals will affect:

- anyone planning a construction project costing more than **£300,000**
- any construction project **clients** or **architects** that produce, manage or dispose of waste
- **suppliers** to the construction industry
- **environmental regulators**, i.e. local authorities and the Environment Agency.

Purpose of SWMPs

SWMPs should result in:

- greater **resource efficiency** in the construction sector
- improved **re-use** and **recycling** rates
- a reduction in **fly-tipping**
- a reduction in site **accidents**.

SWMPs are intended to change the construction industry's attitude to waste by raising the profile of waste planning.

SWMP content

The SWMP should:

- identify the different **types of waste** that will be produced by the project, and note any changes in the **design** and **materials specification** that seek to minimise this waste
- consider how to **re-use, recycle** or **recover** the different wastes produced by the project
- require the construction company to demonstrate that it is complying with the **duty of care** regime
- record the **quantities** of waste produced.

Key elements of the SWMP process

- **One individual**, usually the principal contractor, will be responsible for writing and implementing the SWMP.
- There are **two levels** of SWMP – standard and detailed.
The standard SWMP is for projects costing between £300,000 and £500,000. The detailed SWMP will be for projects costing more than £500,000 and will require more detailed reporting.
- Local authorities and the Environment Agency will **enforce** SWMPs and they will impose **penalties** for failure to make, keep or produce a SWMP.

If you would like to discuss any of the issues highlighted in this newsletter then drop an email to Jon on jon@wilkinssafety.co.uk or call the office **01458 253682**



Your Business is Safer
Your Business is Safer in Our Hands