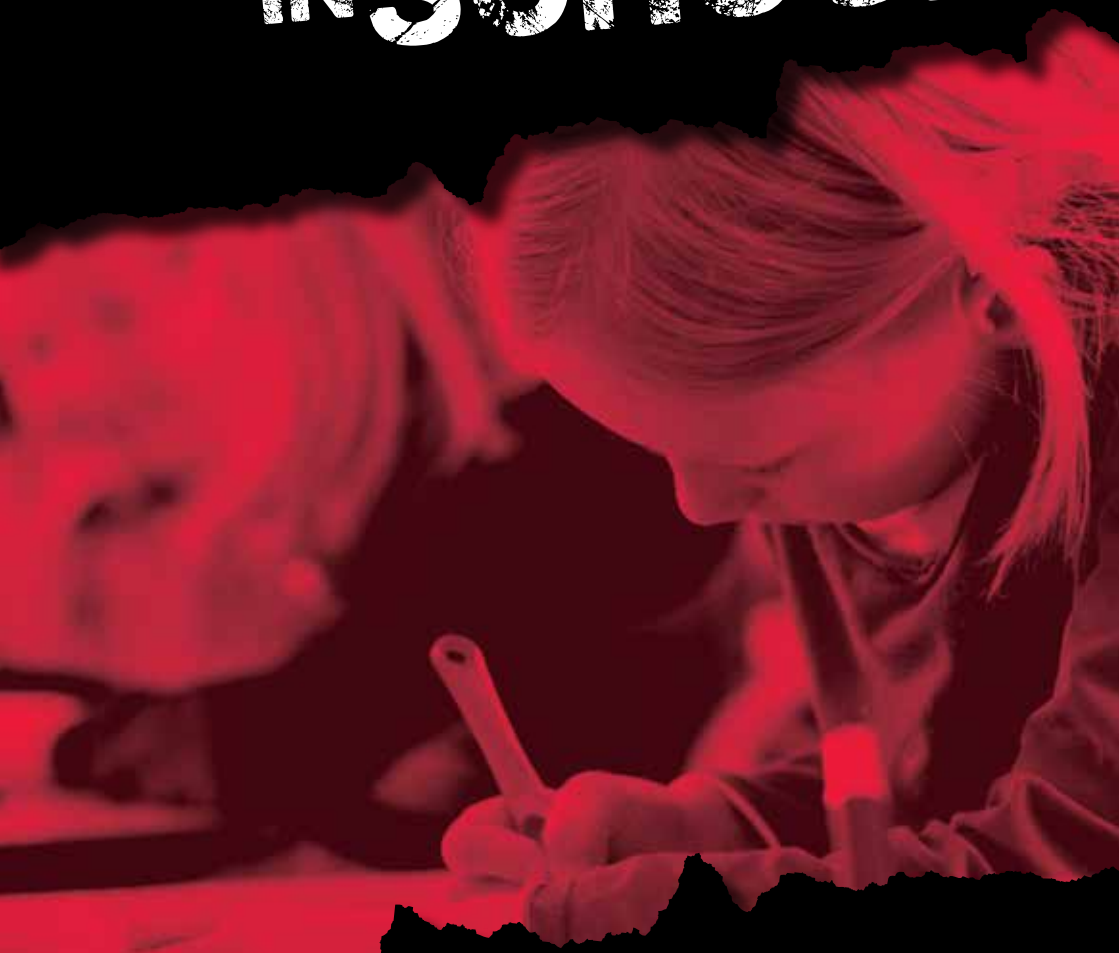


nipsa
Protecting Public Services
Supporting Public Servants

ASBESTOS INSCHOOLS



**WHAT NIPSA MEMBERS NEED TO KNOW
ABOUT THE HIDDEN KILLER
WITHIN OUR SCHOOLS**

Asbestos remains a hidden killer in schools throughout Northern Ireland. According to figures released by the Belfast Telegraph, in September 2012 asbestos is contained in 876 schools across Northern Ireland, including 61 nursery schools.

Some 84% of schools in the Northern Education and Library Board contain asbestos, the highest percentage of all the Boards.

Crocidolite, (also known as blue asbestos) the most dangerous form of asbestos, is present in 21 schools including 10 in the Southern Board area.

Any exposure to asbestos runs the risk of contracting lung diseases, including the fatal cancer, mesothelioma.

Asbestos related illnesses are usually diagnosed after a very long period between exposure and symptoms presenting. Children in schools with asbestos are especially at risk due to the longer incubation period from being exposed to asbestos at a very young age. A child of five is more than five times more likely to develop mesothelioma by the age of 80 than a teacher aged 30.

Where is asbestos likely to be present in schools?

Asbestos could be present in any building that was built or refurbished before the year 2000. The most common uses of asbestos in school buildings are:

- Sprayed fire insulation; on structural beams and girders, roof sheeting, wall cladding, boiler flues, gutters, rainwater pipes, water tanks;
- Insulation boards; ceiling tiles, partition walls, heater cupboards, protective mats in laboratories;
- Asbestos cement products; wall and ceiling panels, corrugated roof panels, tiles, gutters, pipe and decorative plaster finishes;
- Lagging; pipe work, insulating jackets for cold water tanks and boilers.

The Hidden Killer

ols.



Crocidolite (blue)¹



Chrysotile (white)²



Amosite (brown)³

for illustrative purposes only

All asbestos poses risks.

All types of asbestos are dangerous and all products containing asbestos pose a degree of risk. All asbestos in schools will be old; the risks are increased if asbestos is disturbed or the asbestos product is damaged. There is no 'safe' level of exposure, even relatively low level or occasional exposure to asbestos dust can increase the risk of mesothelioma.

Who is responsible for managing asbestos in schools?

The responsibility for ensuring the risk of asbestos exposure in schools is effectively managed lies with the 'duty holder'. In many cases the duty holder will delegate risk assessments and an 'asbestos management plan' to a competent person within the school.

The duty holder must take action to find out if there are materials containing asbestos in school, how much there is, where it is and in what condition it is in. This survey must cover all parts of the building and the results should be recorded in an Asbestos Register, which in turn must be provided to anyone who may work on, or disturb, these materials.

All schools should have an Asbestos Management Plan which is available to all staff

A written Asbestos Management Plan should include:

- A policy statement and management procedures;
- A timetable and priorities for action on removal;
- Arrangements for monitoring materials left in place;
- Responsibilities of staff, competent persons, governors and duty holders;
- Dealing with emergency situations;
- Arrangements for informing and training staff, including visitors and contractors;
- Reviewing arrangements regularly.

School Governors and Head Teachers should:

- Be sure they know who is the 'duty holder' and any 'competent person' identified to carry out an Asbestos Survey or draw up an Asbestos Management Plan;
- Ask to see the Asbestos Register and the Asbestos Management Plan;
- Ask for training on asbestos awareness;
- Talk to their NIPSA Branch Health and Safety Rep;
- Talk to HSENI about asbestos support.

Action on Asbestos in Your School

Health and Safety Rep should:

- Ask to see the Asbestos Register and the Asbestos Management Plan;
- Ask for training on asbestos awareness;
- Talk to the HSENI about asbestos support.

NIPSA Policy:

To call on the Government to set a programme for the phased removal of asbestos from all schools, with priority being given to those schools where the asbestos is considered to be most dangerous or damaged.