Asbestos Awareness Toolbox Talk

Key points, do's and don'ts, and questions with answers. The attendance sign-off sheet is on the last page.

Asked to show your toolbox talk records? The Site Book keeps each talk and its signatures with the job, on Pro: **thesitebook.co.uk/features/toolbox-talks**

Key points to cover

- Asbestos was widely used in UK buildings constructed before 2000 — assume it may be present in any pre-2000 building
- You CANNOT identify asbestos by looking at it — only laboratory analysis can confirm it
- Common locations: insulation boards, ceiling tiles, floor tiles, pipe lagging, textured coatings (Artex), roof sheets, and soffits
- If you suspect asbestos: STOP work immediately, keep people away, and report to your supervisor
- Only licensed contractors may do licensable asbestos work — such as removing sprayed coatings or pipe lagging, and work on asbestos insulating board (AIB) that isn't short duration
- The duty to manage asbestos applies to non-domestic premises and the common parts of multi-occupancy residential buildings. It does not apply inside individual domestic dwellings, including rented homes. Where asbestos is known or presumed to be present, the dutyholder must prepare and implement a written asbestos management plan and keep it under review.
- Before intrusive refurbishment or demolition where asbestos may be present, ensure that a competent surveyor has completed an appropriate refurbishment or demolition survey covering the areas and materials affected by the planned work. A management survey alone is not sufficient for this purpose.
- The domestic exception applies only to the premises duty to manage asbestos. Builders and other contractors must still identify and control asbestos risks before work that could disturb materials in a home.

Do's and don'ts

Do

- Check the asbestos register before starting work
- Attend asbestos awareness training and keep your certificate current
- Report any damaged or deteriorating suspect materials to your supervisor
- Follow the site-specific emergency procedure if asbestos is discovered
- Wash your hands and face before eating, drinking, or smoking on site

Don't

- Never drill, cut, sand, or scrape materials that could contain asbestos without confirmation they are asbestos-free
- Never use power tools on suspect materials
- Never sweep up asbestos dust or debris with a normal broom
- Never take contaminated clothing home — use disposable overalls where required
- Never ignore damaged asbestos-containing materials — even if they look small

Questions to check understanding

Ask each question and let the crew answer before you read out the answer.

Q1. How many people die from asbestos-related disease in the UK each year?

Answer: Around 5,000 people per year, according to HSE figures. The main diseases are mesothelioma, asbestos-related lung cancer, and asbestosis.

Q2. Can you identify asbestos just by looking at it?

Answer: No. Asbestos fibres are too small to see with the naked eye, and many asbestos-containing materials look identical to non-asbestos alternatives. Only laboratory analysis can confirm the presence of asbestos.

Q3. What should you do if you accidentally disturb suspected asbestos?

Answer: Stop work immediately, move yourself and others away from the area, prevent access (close doors, put up barriers), do not try to clean up, and report it to your supervisor straight away.

Q4. In what year did it become illegal to use asbestos in UK construction?

Answer: Asbestos was fully banned in the UK in 1999. However, buildings constructed before 2000 may still contain asbestos-containing materials installed before the ban.

Attendance sign-off sheet: Asbestos Awareness Toolbox Talk

Everyone who attended prints their name and signs to confirm they received this talk.

Date _____ **Time** _____

Site or location _____ **Presented by** _____

No.	Name (print)	Company	Signature
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			
11			
12			
13			
14			
15			
16			
17			
18			

Presenter's signature _____

This is general guidance for UK construction sites. Check it against your own risk assessment, method statement and the site before you deliver it. Toolbox talk from The Site Book, reviewed 30 October 2026. Read it online at thesitebook.co.uk/toolbox-talks/asbestos-awareness.