

LEIA SAFETY MATTERS

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ASBESTOS AND YOU

We make no apologies for bringing up the subject of asbestos again. Recent research has shown that nearly 1 in 3 construction workers has never checked the sites asbestos register before beginning work on a new site.

The research report also highlighted that, although people were aware of what the risks posed by asbestos are, they were unsure what to do if they found asbestos.

The asbestos register is a legal document that the building owner or his agent must prepare and must make available to any who are working in a building so that they can be made aware of the presence (if any) of asbestos in the areas where they will be working. It is prepared to assist you stay healthy in your work.

Beware that some asbestos surveys (and hence, the asbestos register) may not cover some areas (even though they should). Lift shafts are notorious for being omitted from asbestos surveys because the surveyor (for whatever reason) was not able to access the shaft and make an inspection. The same goes for machine rooms; the inspector may have been limited in what can be inspected, omitting to remove covers for example.

Where the inspector has not been able to inspect must be noted in the register.

If you have seen the LEIA Asbestos Awareness presentation, or been on your own company's training, you should be aware of where asbestos can be found and in what materials it is likely to be present; because of its high tensile strength and its chemical, electrical and heat resistance qualities, asbestos was used extensively as a building material – particularly from the 1950s through to the mid 1980s. Although some of this material has been removed over the years, there are many thousands of tonnes of asbestos still present in buildings.

Asbestos was used by the lift and escalator industry up to the early 1990s. It was particularly used as a fire insulator in lift doors and surrounds and also as a brake material on machines and as an insulator around electrical components. However, the main source of exposure to lift operatives comes from the asbestos contained in the building structure. The lagging around pipework and damaged fire insulating walls in lift shafts and machine rooms are the principal sources of exposure.



So, what do you do?

If you find something that makes you suspicious, be like the British Transport Police's latest motto: "See it; Say it, Sorted" in other words, don't ignore it, don't just carry on working and especially, don't take samples to take back to the depot for investigation.

Do stop work immediately, do withdraw from the suspect area and do report it, both to the building representative and especially to your supervisor or manager who will need to take it up with the building owners.

LEIA have produced a Safety Information Sheet for those who are responsible for managing asbestos. Your manager can download this from the LEIA website and pass it to the building owner to help them.

HEALTH AND HYGIENE

It is, unfortunately, not uncommon for field personnel to come across unhygienic and unhealthy situations when they are carrying out their work. This comes in many different guises from animal and bird waste to drug taking paraphernalia.

While it might in some case be possible to use protective equipment, many companies have policies specifying which materials are low risk and those which must be cleaned by a specialist contractor before work can continue.

An example is shown below but this list is not exhaustive

Materials considered low risk

- Normal accumulation of litter
- Lift related debris: oils, greases, hydraulic fluids and dust

Materials to be removed by a specialist cleaner

- Human and Animal Waste
- Pigeons and pigeon droppings
- Vermin: rats and mice (dead and alive)
- Chemicals
- Sharps - needles, hypodermic syringes
- Blood or other body fluids.

Typically, waste accumulates in pits so care is always needed when working in or cleaning these areas

- Always remove debris using a vacuum cleaner or brush and dustpan - never use your bare hands
- Always wear gloves – throw-away latex gloves will protect the skin but will offer no protection from sharp objects

On completion of work remove all protective equipment and wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water. Make sure you know your own company's policy on this matter and always follow it.

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Examples of what you might find:



Rodent Droppings



Dead vermin



Discarded Drug Paraphernalia



HOW SAFE IS YOUR HOME?

Your employer is responsible (along with you (see below)) for your safety and health whilst at work, and you should be properly trained and given information instruction and training on how to conduct yourself safely and healthily whilst at work, but have you ever thought about how safe is your home?

Figures from RoSPA and the HSE give contrasting numbers of those killed at work and those killed in accidents in domestic situations. In 2016/17, the HSE statistics show 137 workers died in workplace accidents. RoSPA estimate over 6000 people die in home accidents every year.

When you think about the things you do at work; working at height, working with electricity, manual handling, working with chemicals hazardous to health, consider that you do the same activities at home, albeit perhaps in a more limited way.



**Have you ever
done
something like
this?**

(and perhaps got away with it?)

Safety at work isn't all PPE, guarding and engineering solutions, it's about getting into a habit and improving safety skills. Learning to 'look before you leap' ie looking before moving, whether it's moving your hands, body, car or tools, and thinking about whether that move is going to be a safe one.

Consider that, in your own and your family's best interests, you should act as safely at home as you would at work.

EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITIES

It is sometimes worth reminding ourselves that employees can fall foul of health and safety law if they fail to take reasonable care of themselves. This is demonstrated by the recent prosecution of a scaffolder which has been reported in the health and safety press.

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Mr M a 28-year-old scaffolder was seen working at height without any protection between 13m and 18m above a concrete car park. There was no edge protection in the form of a guard rail and he was not harnessed to anything – if he had fallen he would almost certainly have died. Two levels below him in the picture, is a trainee he is supervising.

The HSE investigated and found his employer had taken reasonable steps – no doubt the Principal Contractor and Client were also looked at but, in this instance, only the employee was prosecuted.

The individual was well trained and had the correct equipment available but chose not to use it. He was also accompanied by a trainee and so was setting a very unsafe example.

He received a 6-month suspended sentence and 100 hours of community service.

The HSE press release said *“It also serves to remind employees that they have a duty to look after themselves”*

MISUSE OF LIFT EQUIPMENT

LEIA have received many reports over the years of misuse by operators of lifts, usually to expedite work when something causes the lift to malfunction. Examples have been seen of beaks overriding locks, cardboard doing the same and routine use of release keys to open doors.

Well-intentioned actions by the employees at a business relying upon the lift can put persons at extreme, possibly fatal risks.

This misuse of lifts is prevalent in many situations, and although it may be the ultimate fault of the owner or his employees who caused an accident, the lift company and the lift company employees can be charged with offences and hauled into court, even though they may be found innocent.

If you find any instance of abuse of the lift machinery or operation, you must report it to your supervisor or manager for action with the owner.

LEIA have produced an information sheet aimed at lift owners highlighting this abuse and of the tragic consequences that can occur; you managers can use this to support their argument with the lift owner