

Asbestos issues in industrial sheds: what to spot

Overview

- Cement or metal roofs
- MMMF insulation
- Fibreboard wall/ceiling
- Cement rainwater goods
- Cement flue pipes
- Floor tile/bitumen
- Cement roof
- AIB cladding panels
- Fibreboard wall/ceiling cladding
- Pipe lagging
- Sprinkler pipework
- Gaskets at flanges

If you have any of the above and are not sure if asbestos is present or not, please contact us immediately to arrange an urgent asbestos survey.

Why not get in touch to find out how we could help you?



In the next in our series on asbestos issues in specific building-types, we're taking a look at industrial sheds. These buildings can be deceptive. Even though they are often made of profiled metal cladding with steel frames, masonry walls and UPVC windows, they are large open spaces that can hide older structures. This is particularly true for sheds from the 1970s/1980's where the cement roof or walls forming the weather proofing have been overlaid or underclad.

When you're looking at 1980s units, look out for potential issues such as:

1980s units tend to have cement or metal roofs - often with plasterboard, foam or fibreboard lining panels and concealing MMMF insulation. They also frequently have metal walls with similar lining panels, concrete floors and a steel frame.

Some fibreboard wall/ceiling cladding has an asbestos paper lining. These units commonly have either metal or cement rainwater goods.

Remember, these units also have expansion joints in the wall masonry that can be sealed with asbestos-containing mastic or putty which looks very similar to window putty.

With these units, the structure is not the only aspect to contain asbestos. You should also watch out for the services, including cement flue pipes, seals and gaskets to hot air blowers/burners, fire doors, the floor tile/bitumen and textured coating found in many rooms.

Early 1970s and 1960s units

Getting older, early 1970s and 1960s industrial sheds may also have spray coating. Dating back to before World War II, this was commonly attached to building roofs and steel frames for fire protection and thermal insulation. These units are also likely to have the cement roof, AIB cladding panels and fire protection to steel columns as AIB and various bitumens like vinyl floor tiles, damp-proof courses and other similar materials to those listed above.

Some fibreboard wall/ceiling cladding has AIB lining panels and the fuseboards may contain a variety of asbestos products.

You should also be aware of the use of AIB within the sheds for fanlights, ceiling cladding or firebreaks between units at both low and roof levels.

In sheds where heating was an integral component, there may also be pipe lagging of both sectional pre-formed and 'compo' type, along with the associated boiler features mentioned above. Sprinkler pipework also is known to contain gaskets and flanges.

Whilst there are some significant issues to watch out for, older units are getting rarer. This is thanks to increasing demolition which is improving the quality of industrial shed stock. But the prevalence of asbestos in these types of units shows just how much people trusted in the "wonder material" for use in various cladding materials to both structure and services - and even shuttering or formwork used to place the steel piles.

Please note: These lists are not exhaustive and other issues can arise. What experience have you had of potential asbestos hazards in industrial sheds?

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