

# Independent Guide

## When was asbestos first used?



Independent workplace compliance

### Introduction

Although asbestos has been evident in ceramics in the Neolithic age and used by Egyptians as burial shrouds c.2000BC asbestos was first highlighted by Pliny the Elder that slaves die young of lung disease who work in asbestos mines.

Asbestos products first appeared in the UK in 1857, but it was not until the 1940's-70's when asbestos was used in large quantities.

### Where does asbestos come from?

Asbestos is a naturally occurring mineral that comes from metamorphic (ultramafic) rock and is mined straight from the ground usually in open cast mining activities. Asbestos is formed usually by metasomatic replacement of magnesium-rich rocks.

### How dangerous is asbestos?

Asbestos is carcinogenic to humans and can cause a type of cancer (mesothelioma) and asbestosis – a chronic lung disease. Both can prove fatal and are responsible for over 5000 deaths per year in the UK and over 100,000 worldwide.

### What is asbestos used for?

Asbestos has been used in over 3,500 products worldwide most commonly as loose packing, lagging, sprays, insulation board, ceiling tiles, millboard, paper products and textiles, cement products, textured coatings, bitumen products and floor tiles. Asbestos can be mixed in with other products or used raw.

### Why was asbestos used?

Asbestos has many properties useful to the building industry including great insulation, fire protection and corrosion resistant. Asbestos is also cheap, plentiful and when mixed with other products improve that materials strength.

### When was asbestos used in construction?

Asbestos was widely used as a building construction material in the UK from the 1930's-1980's. Amosite and Crocidolite was banned in 1980 with Chrysotile banned in 1999.

**This guide is of a general nature; specific advice can be obtained from Assurity Consulting.**

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