

# Asbestos: Frequently Asked Questions

## How can asbestos be identified?

An ACM (Asbestos Containing Material) can only be identified by sampling the material during an asbestos survey, using a specialist UKAS (United Kingdom Accreditation Service) Accredited laboratory. The samples are then taken back to the specialised lab for identification.

## Who can residents contact regarding asbestos in their property?

Residents who have any questions about ACMs in their property should contact the property desk. Our Property Desk will check ProMaster, MTVH's asbestos register, to see if ACMs are present. If the property desk is unsure, they will contact the dedicated asbestos team who will look into it and advise appropriately.

## How does MTVH protect residents from asbestos?

The safety of all our residents is our number one priority. The legal responsibility MTVH has as a landlord is to monitor and manage asbestos containing materials in communal areas and common parts of non-domestic and domestic buildings such as blocks of flats, foyers, corridors, and lift shafts. These requirements are set out by the Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012 (CAR 2012).

## What should residents do if they think they may have disturbed it?

If a resident believes an ACM has been damaged or come across loose material which they believe to be an ACM, they should contact the property desk right away.

The property desk will check ProMaster to see if the material in question has been tested and if it is asbestos. If the material has not been tested, the case will be passed straight to the asbestos team who will raise the appropriate job for the situation. If the damaged material is confirmed as non-asbestos, the property desk will organise a repair.

## What is MTVH doing about asbestos?

MTVH is carrying out asbestos surveys to find ACMs in communal areas and in homes where works are being carried out that could contain asbestos. The information is kept on a detailed asbestos register and used to assess the ACM and its location to see if it poses a risk or if it can be left in as is.

In the context of social housing organisations, the Duty to Manage as detailed within the regulation does not apply within parts of sheltered accommodation premises which are used for domestic purposes, e.g. common rooms such as dining rooms and lounges. However, the Duty to Manage does apply to communal areas not allocated to a particular person, such as garages, foyers, lifts, stairs, lobbies, boiler rooms, plant rooms and communal yards.

How many properties do we think might contain asbestos, and why don't we simply get rid of it all?

Any property built before January 2000 will more than likely contain asbestos. In line with legislation and the Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) guidance, asbestos-containing materials that are in good condition are to be left in place.

However, if an asbestos-containing material is in poor condition or if a repair, improvement, or alteration takes place on or near it, we will remove it. The important thing to remember is that if ACMs are in good condition, they do not pose a risk.

Which properties are being inspected and what are the compliance levels?

Currently, the asbestos re-inspection programme for non-domestic properties is underway. Domestic properties do not need to be inspected, however, MTVH have gone beyond our remit and have carried out asbestos surveys for approximately 95% of our homes.

Under current legislation, employers must ensure their employees are not exposed to asbestos at their place of work.

A domestic property is considered a place of work when contractors need to carry out visits and undertake work in a home.

Therefore, we have extended our register to cover domestic properties so contractors can access that information before commencing their work.

### **What is a leaseholder's responsibility?**

Leaseholders (homeowners) or freeholders are responsible for all fixtures and fittings within the property. We are responsible for the structure of the building and communal areas.

It is best to leave any items people think may contain asbestos in place if they are in good condition. If a leaseholder would like to remove materials that contain an ACM, we recommend that they contact an asbestos-removal contractor licensed by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) to carry out the work. We can offer guidance if needed and we ask that leaseholders inform us of the works so we can keep a record and pass on any relevant information to new residents, contractors and third parties.

For further information, please refer to the asbestos leaflet for residents. This leaflet outlines what residents should look for if they believe they may have asbestos, and answers common questions, i.e. what is asbestos, why was it used in homes, and what the current regulations are.