



ASBESTOS CONTAMINATION IN POWERED ACCESS EQUIPMENT TOOLBOX TALK

This Toolbox Talk provides guidance for powered access rental companies on how to deal with suspected asbestos contaminated equipment when it is off-hired.

Powered access equipment can sometimes work in hazardous environments such as refurbishment, building maintenance and demolition. Asbestos can be present in these types of workplaces and can contaminate clothing and equipment. When this equipment is off-hired, there is the potential for it to be returned to the rental company in a contaminated condition.

WHAT IS ASBESTOS?

Asbestos is a naturally occurring mineral composed of flexible fibres that are resistant to heat, electricity, and corrosion. Asbestos can be present in flat and corrugated sheeting, cement pipes, insulation, roofing, textiles, textured paints and other materials. Asbestos is extremely fibrous and, if inhaled, these fibres can become trapped in the lungs. Exposure to asbestos increases the risk of developing cancers in the lungs and the latency period can sometimes be decades after initial exposure.

There are three main types of asbestos:

- Chrysotile (white)
- Amosite (brown)
- Crocidolite (blue)

WHAT SHOULD A RENTAL COMPANY HAVE IN PLACE TO CONTROL THE RISK OF EXPOSURE?

- A responsible person in charge of asbestos management.
- Specific procedures to follow if asbestos is suspected to be present on equipment on site, or after it has been off-hired and returned to the depot.

MINIMISING THE RISK:

- Train staff to recognise asbestos and the procedures to follow if they think equipment may be contaminated. This includes delivery drivers, workshop/service technicians and yard staff.
- Consider asbestos awareness training for staff.

WHO NEEDS TO KNOW?

This TBT applies to all individuals involved in the powered access industry, including:

- Rental company managers, supervisors, technicians/engineers.
- Operators.
- Delivery drivers.

THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE HIRER/USER

The responsibility for keeping powered access equipment clear of asbestos while on hire is the hirer/user of the equipment. If equipment is contaminated with asbestos, the hirer/user will need to arrange for it to be cleaned and a clean certificate issued to the hire company verifying that professional decontamination has been completed.

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF YOU SUSPECT EQUIPMENT IS CONTAMINATED WITH ASBESTOS?

- Stop work immediately and warn others around you to stay clear of the area. Use signage and segregate the area. If required, move the equipment outdoors to a designated safe area.
- Confirm what it is, or assume it is asbestos.
- Carry out a risk assessment to determine if the removal of the asbestos requires a licensed contractor.
- If delivery drivers suspect asbestos is present on an off-hired MEWP on-site, they should not collect it. They should report the issue to the hirer/user and inform the MEWP rental company of the suspected contamination.

NEVER:

- Attempt to wash or clean off equipment that may be contaminated with asbestos with a high-pressure washer or airline.
- Clean air filters with a compressed airline.
- Sweep a workshop floor if you think an asbestos-contaminated equipment has been parked there.
- Never take asbestos-contaminated clothing home.

REMEMBER:

- Exposure to asbestos could affect you in later life. It can cause asbestosis, lung cancer or mesothelioma.
- Always protect yourself and others around you.
- Always keep up to date with any changes with the management of asbestos in your region.

USEFUL REFERENCES

- International Labour Organisation (ILO) – [Occupational health: Asbestos](#)
- UK Health and Safety Executive (HSE) – [Asbestos Guidance](#)