

[REDACTED]

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**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** 09 November 2020 11:04  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** FW: Freedom of Information Request - Hazards associated with exposure to asbestos dust

FOI no. 202010232

Dear [REDACTED]

I am responding to your enquiry of 16<sup>th</sup> October. “**Subject:** Freedom of Information Request - Hazards associated with exposure to asbestos dust” Where information is already published the response will direct you to that publicly available information.

- 1) **Apart from nil, is there a safe level of exposure to asbestos dust?**  
HSE is not aware that a safe level or threshold of exposure has been found, though there may be one.
- 2) **Are dutyholders required to prevent the release of asbestos dust where it is reasonably practicable to do so?**  
Yes. HSE guidance such as [L143 Managing and working with asbestos](#) makes this clear (regulation 16).
- 3) **In circumstances where it is not reasonably practicable to prevent the release of any asbestos dust, are dutyholders required to minimise the release of asbestos dust at source?**  
Yes, duty holders are required to do so and this is set out in The Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012 (regulation 16) and associated guidance. Further information can be found in [L143 Managing and working with asbestos](#)
- 4) **Does the current clearance limit / limit of detection of 0.01 f/ml represent a safe or acceptable level of asbestos dust?**  
No. Duty holders must ensure that the level is reduced as low as is reasonably practicable.
- 5) **In order for a dutyholder to consider whether its activities are increasing concentrations of asbestos dust in the open air to any extent would you expect the following?:**
  - a. **Sensitive asbestos dust monitoring to be carried out which can detect the true asbestos dust concentrations in the air before the works start (i.e. those sensitive enough to compare against the concentrations reported in the publication “Asbestos and man-made mineral fibres in buildings – Practical Guidance” (1999));**  
If work is to be undertaken on asbestos-containing materials (ACMs) a risk assessment must be carried out to assess the potential risk of exposure to asbestos, and appropriate steps put in place to prevent or reduce exposure. Further guidance can be found on HSE [webpages](#).

and

  - b. **Similarly sensitive asbestos monitoring would need to be carried out during the works that can detect a material increase in the asbestos dust concentrations;**  
If work is being undertaken on asbestos-containing materials (ACMs) the risk assessment should identify if this may be required to ensure that levels are as low as is reasonably practicable. The risk assessment would also need to take into consideration the circumstances of the work and therefore appropriate methods of control.

- c. **No other logical means of determining any increase of asbestos dust concentrations exists, other than dust sampling sensitive enough to determine the background (baseline) levels?**

There may be a number of ways of finding indicators of increased dust evolution and the most basic, for indoors, would be a visual one using a Tyndall beam and recording the observation before during and after. Attempts at quantification would themselves only be indicators of a rise rather than absolute but periodic air sampling and then analysis by a method suitable to indicate levels on site and on the perimeter if in the open air would seem to be indicated.

- 6) **Where a Planning Application takes place for the processing of non-licensed asbestos materials of up to 30,000 tonnes of asbestos contaminated soils a year, would HSE expect to be consulted in the process?**

HSE would only be consulted if the proposed site was within an HSE consultation zone or within the vicinity of a licensed explosives site. In the event the proposed site is within an HSE consultation zone, HSE would only comment from the perspective of considering the risk to people at the processing facility from any nearby major hazard site or pipeline.

- 7) **Would HSE be the correct enforcing authority for the manual handling and processing of asbestos contaminated soils which include asbestos picking operations?**

Yes.

- 8) **Would HSE recommend the use of strict precautions to prevent the escape of asbestos dust into the environment?**

Yes, duty holders are required to prevent, or if this is not reasonably practicable to minimise, the spread of asbestos. This is set out in The Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012 (regulation 16) and associated guidance [L143 Managing and working with asbestos](#)

If you have any queries about this letter, please contact me.

If you are unhappy with the decisions made by HSE you may ask for an internal review within two calendar months of the date of this letter by writing to me.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

The Information Commissioner's Office  
Wycliffe House  
Water Lane  
Wilmslow  
Cheshire  
SK9 5AF  
Tel: 01625 545700  
Fax: 01625 524510  
Email: [mail@ico.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:mail@ico.gsi.gov.uk)  
Website: <http://www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk>



**Health & Safety Executive**  
FOD Southern Division  
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[www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk)

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