

# Asbestos – Behaving Well & Raising Awareness

Phil Pinnington, head of health & safety at the Glass & Glazing Federation says that installers should behave properly when they might come across asbestos and they should raise awareness of the problem to staff, colleagues and customers.

**An article in January's edition of The Installer caught my eye. The piece reported on the prosecution of a landlord and building contractor for breach of the asbestos regulations.**

If you haven't read the details I urge you to find your January copy and turn to page 5 and take a minute or two to read the report or go to <http://profinder.eu/inst-jan19/inst-jan19.html>.

The landlord was a legal entity as was the building contractor and their prosecution was quite appropriate as it had been proven that there was a disregard for a safe process. In the home improvement sector, where a landlord doesn't exist and the contract is between the homeowner and installer, it isn't possible to lay equal blame.

Clearly in the in the incident reported, both parties were equally culpable but the contractor still bore the larger burden of cost. Although the contractor holds the higher expectation to recognise asbestos insulating board (AIB), as in all probability they will have come across it more frequently and know how to properly deal with it, a landlord should be aware of their legal duties to manage the safety of their properties.

When installers are dealing with the regular homeowner it can be a massive challenge. What is regularly dismissed by homeowners is the residual risks they carry should AIB be removed unprofessionally. Homes including outhouses and conservatories are where people spend lots of their lives. By not properly man-

aging or removing AIB, there is a high likelihood that asbestos fibres will remain on surfaces and in the air. These fibres will in all probability be breathed in by occupiers.

## Hazard to family health

Let's just for a moment consider who these occupiers are. More often than not it's a family with maybe two or more children. Without seeming to state the obvious, children are growing and that includes their lungs. Should a child of 4-years of age breath in asbestos fibres, the risk of lung damage increases in the same way studies have shown children can be affected by passive smoking. So, in the same way we raise the awareness of the risks from passive smoking we believe we need to make consumers aware of the risks arising from uncontrolled removal of asbestos from the home.

## A common occurrence?

I was recently contacted by the HSE asking what our standards were in relation to the removal of AIB soffits. The question came after a consumer had reported that a builder had simply shoved a soffit containing AIB into the loft-space. The consumer, quite rightly, was alarmed about this and reported it. How often does this happen? I would venture to surmise that it's not uncommon.

## Raising awareness

We at the GGF have continued our campaign to persuade the HSE to open a meaningful discussion on how we can best manage



asbestos removal in the domestic market whilst making homeowners more reliably informed of the risks. We continue to gather statistics in support of this campaign and we're gradually getting interest from key players and local inspectors at the HSE.

Our commitment to maintain the highest standards in asbestos removal remains core to our campaign. We have published consumer's guides giving installers the opportunity to give unbiased information on asbestos, its risks and where it can be found.

We continue to make this information available to all. We believe that by giving proper information regarding the risks we can go some way to change home owners' misguided suspicions that installers simply use asbestos as an excuse to inflate the cost. 

For details of this consumer guide please go to <https://www.myglazing.com/about-ggf/homeowners-guides/>