



**Resourcing  
Solutions**  
*engaging people*

**HSQE Briefing**  
**October 2019**



## Our Safety Vision:

Our vision of “preventing harm to all” is at the centre of our Safety Strategy and is synonymous with our commitment to resourcing and working safely.

We believe that our vision can be achieved if we all develop a safe mind-set, plan our tasks correctly and actively seek ways to prevent incidents. We also believe that behaving in a safe way will also lead to zero accidents. We have devised a set of rules that underpins our vision and are consistent with our mantra.

**Think safe, act safe and be safe!**

## This Months Safety Cascade

### Monthly topic

- Asbestos Awareness

### Safety bulletins

- Trench collapse (Working in excavations)
- Near Miss – Worker almost hit by train
- Access gate safety issues

## Why is asbestos dangerous?

- Asbestos still kills around 5000 workers each year. This is more than the number of people killed on the road
- Around 20 tradesman die each week as a result of past exposure
- However, asbestos is not just a problem of the past. It can be present today in any building built or refurbished before the year 2000

When materials that contain asbestos are disturbed or damaged, fibres are released into the air. When these fibres are inhaled, they can cause serious diseases. These diseases will not affect you immediately; they often take a long time to develop, but once diagnosed, it is often too late to do anything.

Asbestos can cause the following fatal and serious diseases:

**Mesothelioma** – Mesothelioma is a cancer which affects the lining of the lungs (pleura) and the lining surrounding the lower digestive tract (peritoneum). It is almost exclusively related to asbestos exposure and by the time it is diagnosed, it is almost always fatal.

**Asbestos-related lung cancer** - Asbestos-related lung cancer is the same as (looks the same as) lung cancer caused by smoking and other causes. It is estimated that there is around one lung cancer for every mesothelioma death.

**Asbestosis** - Asbestosis is a serious scarring condition of the lung that normally occurs after heavy exposure to asbestos over many years. This condition can cause progressive shortness of breath, and in severe cases can be fatal.

**Pleural thickening** - Pleural thickening is generally a problem that happens after heavy asbestos exposure. The lining of the lung (pleura) thickens and swells. If this gets worse, the lung itself can be squeezed, and can cause shortness of breath and discomfort in the chest.



# Occupational Health – Asbestos: the different types

## What are the Different Types of Asbestos?

The term asbestos refers to six unique minerals belonging to two mineral families – serpentine and amphibole. All forms of asbestos are highly toxic, and exposure can lead to the development of many terminal diseases, such as mesothelioma.

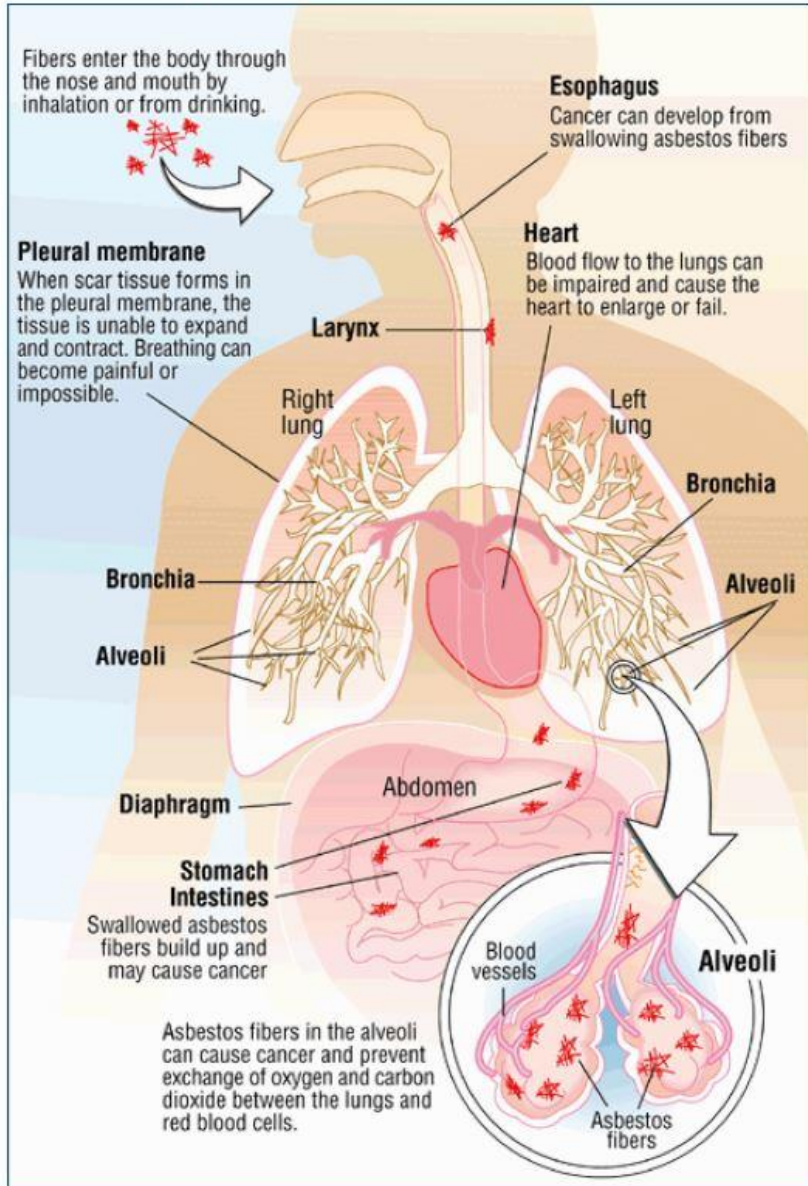
The three main types of asbestos that you may come across whilst carrying out building work are:

- **Chrysotile (white asbestos)** – Chrysotile is the most commonly used type of asbestos and is often contaminated with trace amounts of tremolite. Chrysotile fibres are usually fine in texture, possessing high flexibility and good heat resistant properties, making it ideal for use in cement, brake pads/linings and roofing materials.
- **Amosite (brown asbestos)** – Mined mostly in Africa, amosite is a particularly strong and heat-resistant type of asbestos that was commonly used in cement sheet, plumbing insulation and electrical insulation. Though **all types** of asbestos are toxic, amosite asbestos exposure has a comparatively higher cancer risk.
- **Crocidolite (blue asbestos)** – Crocidolite has very thin fibres and, if inhaled, are easily lodged in the lungs. It's thin fibres and brittle nature make crocidolite one of the most harmful forms of asbestos, as it easily breaks down and leads to asbestos exposure

There are also three minor types of asbestos that you may hear about. Tremolite, actinolite and anthophyllite have never been sold commercially. Instead, they were often found as contaminants in commercially sold asbestos products.

- **Tremolite** – Tremolite fibres are often found as a contaminant in chrysotile asbestos and found in paints, sealants, asbestos-containing insulation products and talc products. It can manifest in several colours, including white, green and grey, and is useful as it can be spun and woven into cloth.
- **Actinolite** – Actinolite fibres are lightweight and generally dark in colour. It comes in various forms, including brittle and fibrous or dense and compact, and is often found in paints, sealants and drywall. Additionally, actinolite expands when heated, making it an effective insulation material. This property has led to actinolite being commonly used as insulation materials and structural fire-proofing.
- **Anthophyllite** – Anthophyllite fibres are grey-brown in colour, commonly found as a contaminant in composite flooring. While anthophyllite is considered to be non-commercial, it was regularly used in products containing vermiculite and talc, such as talcum powder. Even though most studies suggest that the risk of developing mesothelioma from this type of asbestos is much lower than amosite, chrysotile and crocidolite asbestos, there is still a clear link between anthophyllite and the disease.





When microscopic asbestos fibres are inhaled or swallowed, they can become trapped in the body's respiratory or digestive tract. The body can get rid of some asbestos fibres, but many fibres become stuck permanently.

No level of asbestos exposure is considered safe. However, most problems arise after years of repeated and long-term exposure to the carcinogen.

When asbestos fibres accumulate in human tissue through repeat exposure, they cause inflammation and DNA damage. Over time, this damage causes cellular changes that can lead to cancer and other diseases.

The combination of smoking and asbestos exposure multiplies the hazard, creating a greater risk to health.

## Asbestos helpline for Network Rail employees

In the event of a Network Rail employee having a potential exposure to asbestos during the course of their work, they are advised to call the Asbestos Helpline. This service is available between the hours of 0900 – 1700 Monday – Friday.

The Asbestos Helpline contact number is **03300085105** and you would then select **option 4**.



# Safety Bulletin

A serious incident has taken place



everyone  
home safe  
every day

## Trench collapse causes specified injury

Issued to: **Network Rail line managers, safety professionals and RISQS registered contractors**

Ref: NRB19-16

Date of issue: 02/10/2019

Location: Stamford Underbridge, Eastern

Contact: Victoria Kieran, Health & Safety Manager



On 30th September during installation of drainage works, at Stamford Underbridge, a survey levelling rod was left in a trench by mistake. A trench box had been in use earlier but not when a supervisor entered the trench (2.5 – 3.0 metres deep) to retrieve the rod.

As the supervisor was leaving the trench a section of the unsupported clay wall fell and struck the supervisor's back and legs causing them to fall to the trench floor.

Fire and rescue teams attended site and recognising the restrictive nature of the site, and the danger involved in trench collapse, took time to safely remove the supervisor from the trench.

The injured person was taken to hospital by ambulance having sustained a fractured pelvis.

## Discussion Points

- NEVER assume that it is safe to enter or work in an unsupported trench or excavation pit.
- ALWAYS check that the appropriate controls are in place and permit requirements are met.
- While this accident is being investigated, please discuss the following with your team;
  1. How does risk awareness 'drift' on your sites? What do you see?
  2. When and how are you using safety conversations to embed risk awareness and safe practice on our sites?
  3. Discuss the importance of the responsibility to stop and challenge unsafe practice.



## Near miss with a track worker

Issued to: Network Rail line managers,  
safety professionals and RISQS  
registered contractors

Ref: NRL19-14

Date of issue: 21/10/2019

Location: Between Horley & Gatwick Airport  
Station (Southern)

Contact:  
[InvestigationandAssurance@networkrail.co.uk](mailto:InvestigationandAssurance@networkrail.co.uk)



## Overview

At 23:24 hrs on 2 December 2018, a track worker narrowly avoided being struck by a train between Horley and Gatwick Airport stations, on the boundary between Surrey and West Sussex. The track worker was a controller of site safety (COSS) who, together with a strapping operative, had gone onto the railway to remove short circuiting straps.

The COSS moved out of the path of the train, around one second before it reached him, when it was travelling at around 35 mph (56 km/h). Nobody was injured.

## Underlying causes

The Network Rail isolation planning process meant that BAM Nuttall planners lacked the information needed for them to establish the exact location at which work was to be carried out on the track.

The planners lacked the skills and experience needed to understand this and so provided a system of work which provided no protection from train movements at the actual location of the task

The COSS recognised that the planned system of work lacked adequate protection from train movements, but undertook the task without implementing an alternative safe system of work. He wasn't challenged by a colleague.

Network Rail isolation processes did not provide planners outside Network Rail with sufficient information to always be able to plan safe systems of work.

## Key message

The RAIB investigation has identified the following important learning points:

- It is essential that track work is undertaken in accordance with the approved safe system of work, or after following the appropriate formalised system for establishing an alternative safe system of work.
- Challenging inappropriate safety behaviours, and applying a work safe process (stopping work if safety concerns are not resolved) when appropriate, are essential for everyone's safety.
- Safe work planners must seek additional information before completing a safe system of work pack if they lack the detail of the task needed to confidently plan it safely.
- The value of sounding the train horn as a warning if drivers see people in, or possibly in, a position of danger was demonstrated during the Gatwick incident when it almost certainly saved the life of a worker involved. The rule book requires the warning to be given as repeated short horn blasts.

## Access gate safety issue

Issued to: Network Rail safety, maintenance and operational delivery leads and RISQS registered contractors

Ref: NRA19-13

Date of issue: 25/10/2019

Location: National



### Overview

Signs on access gates across our infrastructure are a valuable way to provide safety information, especially to confirm line designations, emergency numbers etc. But they can also cause a 'sail effect' in high winds.

There have been reported cases of people being injured when the gates move in high winds. Some gates also become cluttered with signs which can result in the essential safety messages being less obvious.

### Immediate action required

- Review the signage fixed to all access gates.
- Consider if the signage is required.
- Consider moving signage to the fence lines or a designated site entry board.

**Network Rail share updates of recent incident, accidents and best practice advice online.**

**Please get into the habit of checking this website for the latest news;**

**<https://safety.networkrail.co.uk/tools-resources/safety-bulletins/>**

**“Think Safe,  
Act Safe and  
Be Safe”**

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