

Potential danger of Asbestos in IOM schools



Asbestos is one of the most hazardous materials used in school buildings.

We recently submitted a number of Freedom of Information requests regarding Asbestos in IOM school buildings.

We were contacted in April 2023 by a parent of child attending a local primary school in the north of the Island. The concern raised related to possible exposure to Asbestos Containing Materials (**ACM's**), which have been causally linked to cases of lung cancer and *Mesothelioma*. Asbestos was routinely used in school buildings from 1945 to 1980 such as in roofing materials, pipe lagging and insulation products.

We submitted a FOI request to the Department of Education requesting information on **ACM's** in IOM primary and secondary schools. However, the Department declined to answer our questions and instead referred us to the Department of Infrastructure and the IOM Health & Safety Inspectorate.

The Health & Safety Inspectorate confirmed in a FOI reply that it, "*Has never undertaken an inspection for Asbestos Containing Materials in any IOM school (primary or secondary)*".

The Department of Infrastructure in its response dated 11.08.23 referred to the Control of Asbestos Regulations which came into effect in August 2022.

The DOI stated that it is currently carrying out a gap analysis to identify school buildings which required the relevant Management Survey to be reviewed and it will take time to update Asbestos Registers and also that an Asbestos Management Policy is only still in *draft* form.



Damaged or disturbed asbestos panels may release toxic fibres into the air.

Concerningly, it is therefore currently unclear which Manx primary or secondary schools contain **ACM's** or whether all statutory duties are being fully complied with.

Plainly, the Government owes a duty of care to those entering its schools, whether pupils, teachers, parents or visiting tradespersons.



Specialist operators are required for the expert handling and disposal of dangerous asbestos.

The Manx Government accordingly remains potentially exposed to civil claims under employers' liability, public liability, occupiers' liability and negligence with regard to the danger of Asbestos in school buildings.

See below for FOI responses.

<https://www.ik.im/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/19.07.23-DOE-Potential-danger-of-Asbestos-in-IOM-Schools-1.pdf>

<https://www.ik.im/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/10.08.23-DEFA-Potential-danger-of-Asbestos-in-IOM-Schools-1.pdf>

<https://www.ik.im/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/11.08.23-DOI-Potential-danger-of-Asbestos-in-IOM-Schools-1.pdf>