

4warned newsflash

Bust the dust

Often when we discuss health and safety it is usually the visible safety things we tend to focus on, such as working at heights or using equipment, however, it is just as important to look at some of the less visible health risks we face at work.

A key focus for the HSE currently is dust. Workplace dusts can contain hazardous substances like asbestos, silica and even wood – and breathing this in can cause serious long-term lung damage. These types of dust are linked to chronic, and sometimes even terminal, lung diseases including cancer and silicosis. Even when they are not fatal, each of these conditions can have a significant impact on a person's quality of life.

One of the HSE biggest concerns is the health of construction workers' lungs. Many common jobs on a construction site produce a lot of dust, including removing old materials or using power tools like cut-off saws.

The HSE is currently under-taking a national programme of health inspections, visiting large and small construction sites across the UK.

HSE inspectors are focusing on work that can create a risk to the lungs of construction workers. They will be looking for evidence that those running construction firms, managing construction sites and responsible for working practices know the risk, plan the work and use the right controls – that they are fulfilling their legal duties.

Managers should establish what the dust and other risks are likely to be. This is particularly important regarding the location and condition of any existing asbestos. They should think about the work or tasks involved and who might be affected. They should also ensure that workers also know about the risks and what they need to do in relation to them.

Managers should consider if the risks can be reduced by re designing the task or using different methods of work. Can materials be cut to size off site? Can materials be dampened before cutting? Can you use extraction systems or as a last resort could you use PPE?

For advice on how to improve your management of dust in the workplace and how to reduce your risk please get in touch or visit us at www.4see.co.uk.

