

Directive 2009/148/EC on the protection of workers from the risks related to exposure to asbestos at work

This Directive has as its aim the protection of workers against risks to their health, including the prevention of such risks, arising or likely to arise from exposure to asbestos at work. It lays down the limit values for this exposure, as well as other specific requirements.

Asbestos is a naturally occurring mineral whose fibres can be separated into thin, durable threads. It has been widely used in many industries because the fibres are excellent insulators (resistant to heat, fire and chemicals, and do not conduct electricity).

It is however a particularly dangerous substance (classified as a category 1A carcinogen in [Regulation \(EC\) No 1272/2008](#) on the classification, packaging and labelling of chemicals). If products containing asbestos are disturbed, tiny fibres can be inhaled, leading over time to diseases such as asbestosis, mesothelioma, and other forms of cancer.

This Directive **prohibits activities that expose workers to asbestos fibres** during:

- the extraction of asbestos; or
- the manufacture and processing of asbestos products; or
- the manufacture and processing of products containing intentionally added asbestos.

The only exception from this prohibition is the treatment and disposal of products resulting from demolition and asbestos removal.

Where there is a likely risk of exposure to asbestos dust, the **risk must be assessed** to determine the nature and degree of that exposure, based on a representative sampling of the worker's personal exposure. Employers must notify the responsible authority of the EU country concerned before any work commences.

No worker must be exposed to an airborne concentration of asbestos in excess of 0.1 fibres per cm³. If this is exceeded, work must be halted until further measures are taken to protect the workers concerned, including:

- availability of respiratory and other personal protective equipment;
- warning signs if the limit is exceeded;
- preventing the spread of dust outside the site;
- consultation with workers before activities begin.

Employers must provide appropriate **training** for all workers who are, or are likely to be, exposed to dust from asbestos or materials containing asbestos, at regular intervals and at no cost to the workers. Each **worker's health must be assessed** before exposure, and individual records must be established with further assessments at least every 3 years. Doctors may advise on individual protective measures, which may include the withdrawal of the worker concerned from all exposure to asbestos.

This Directive entered into force on 5 January 2010.