

ASBESTOS AND SAFETY

ASBESTOLUX IN HEATER CABINETS

Reference was made to the use of asbestolux in the CLASP Handbook on "Asbestos and CLASP", circulated to Members in September 1976.

It was noted that Asbestolux manufactured in board or plank form was used for the recirculated warm air heater cabinet baffles detailed for use in Marks 2, 3 and 4 of the CLASP system. It was noted that the material was concealed and that there was no applied finish to the material.

Asbestolux incorporates amosite or brown asbestos and until the mid 70's, was a building material in very common use.

Two letters from Cape Boards and Panels Limited were included in the report and are likely to have formed the basis for decisions on the need for any action or otherwise.

Since then however, two factors have changed. Firstly, the long term effects on health of amosite are now open to rather more question and following active union investigations in a Member's school, amosite fibres were detected in small quantities in the air. The Health and Safety Executive were informed, and tests by them confirmed the findings, although mainly related to situations where there was some physical damage to the surface of the material possibly caused by cleaning procedures.

In the authority in question, this rapidly became almost a political, rather than a health matter and the decision was taken to seal, or remove where practicable, all Asbestolux in the authority's heater cabinets.

The authority informed the Development Group and a meeting was subsequently arranged with a representative of the Health and Safety Executive. Following that meeting, the attached letter was received which essentially confirms the content of the discussion and it will be seen that certainly from a legal standpoint in relation to degree of hazard, the action taken by the authority may be considered unduly cautious.

Nevertheless, the action taken in that authority, is drawn to Members' attention to enable them to best make up their minds on appropriate action in the light of the contents of the letter from the Health and Safety Executive.

DPL/GB/A.1/2.

10th November, 1981.

2 OCT 1981

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Your reference

FILE

GA 34.

Our reference

ADP/SNC/03

Date 23 OCT 1981

Dear Mr Lakin

## ASBESTOS IN WARM AIR HEATING SYSTEMS

Following our recent meeting I am writing to confirm the various points discussed, with regard to the use of asbestos containing insulation board ("Asbestolux") in the cabinets of certain types of warm air heating systems installed in CLASP buildings. The heating systems are, I understand, manufactured by Andrews Weatherfoil Ltd, but the construction of the cabinets is builders work. I also understand that in recent years you have changed to the use of "Supalux", which does not contain asbestos.

Atmospheric sampling in several CLASP buildings using heaters which include Asbestolux in their cabinets has shown very low, but nevertheless detectable, concentrations of asbestos fibres in the air. This sampling was carried out by one CLASP user and independent sampling by the Health and Safety Executive has shown similar results. Analysis has shown that the type of asbestos in the insulation boards is Amosite ("brown asbestos"). I must emphasise that the concentrations of asbestos in air were extremely low (the highest concentration measured was 0.06 fibres/millilitre), and many times lower than the current hygiene standard of 2 fibres/millilitre. Nevertheless they did show the presence of asbestos fibres in the atmospheres of rooms where none would normally be expected, and the only likely source appeared to be the heater cabinets. It also appeared that there was some correlation between the positive results and heater cabinets in which the insulation boards had been damaged in some way.

In the light of our current knowledge of asbestos and asbestos-related diseases, it is not possible to assert either the presence or the absence of risk in this situation. It is however our policy to advise that any exposure to potentially hazardous substances should be avoided if possible, and we have therefore advised that steps should be taken to reduce this exposure to asbestos to the lowest which it is reasonably practicable to attain. Such steps include the cleaning out of heater cabinets to remove accumulated dust, replacement of boards (where possible) with asbestos-free substitutes, and sealing of boards where replacement is not possible. Persons carrying out such work need to be protected by suitable clothing, including respiratory protective equipment, and should use vacuum cleaners suitable for asbestos work.

I believe it would be advisable to bring this matter to the attention of as many CLASP users as possible, so that they can consider whether they wish to take similar action to that which I have outlined above. I should be glad to give you any further information or advice which you may require.

Yours sincerely

*A D Porter*  
A D PORTER, HM Principal Inspector of Factories. 36