



June 2009

LAWYERS JOIN CALL FOR ASBESTOS AWARENESS IN THE HOME

A new report calling for increased awareness of the dangers of asbestos in the home has been welcomed by health and safety lawyers.

The report, *As Safe As Houses?* commissioned by construction union UCATT, makes a raft of safety recommendations, and points out that more could be done to manage asbestos safely and that exposure to risk is still high because of a lack of information available to those who need it most.

"Our members see the appalling results of exposure to asbestos all the time, and we wholeheartedly support the call for more information to be available," said John McQuater, president of the Association of Personal Injury Lawyers (APIL).

"One of our particular areas of concern has been the need for people to be aware of asbestos as they renovate their homes. This is particularly relevant now, of course, because in a credit crunch more people are likely to be improving their homes rather than moving."

And with around 4,000* people a year dying as a result of inhaling the killer dust, getting the safety message across is more important than ever.

"Our message is simple – by all means go ahead with the DIY but if you find asbestos in your home, do not attempt to remove it. Asbestos only becomes dangerous when it is disturbed so leave it well alone and call in the experts."

John said many people are unaware that asbestos may be present in their homes, let alone of the danger it poses.



“Of course people can tackle DIY without coming any harm at all, but we urge people to be vigilant.”

APIL says the following should be treated with caution:

- the stripping of old asbestos insulation material
 - removal of roofing felts, old floor and ceiling tiles, textured paints and plaster containing asbestos
 - removal of partition boards containing asbestos
 - removal of asbestos cement products, commonly compressed into flat or corrugated sheets for roofing or wall cladding
 - removal of specific textured coatings (some forms of Artex contain levels of asbestos)
- Ends -

Note to editors:

- As Safe As Houses? By Dr Linda Waldman and Heather Williams, commissioned by UCATT, was published on 2 June.
- Figures from the HSE at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/overall/hssh0708.pdf>
- APIL (Association of Personal Injury Lawyers) is a not-for-profit organisation, whose members are dedicated to campaigning for improvements in the law to help people who are injured or become ill through no fault of their own.
- For further contact: Lisa Wardle, Press & PR Officer, t:0115 9388715, or Jane Hartwell, Assistant Press & PR Officer, t:0115 9388702
- Further information can also be found at the organisation's website - www.apil.org.uk.