

What clients need to know

If you are a property owner/manager who may have licensed asbestos removal work undertaken at your premises, or are involved in licensed asbestos removal works, you need to understand the re-occupation process. That is what needs to happen before the building, or area where the removal took place, can be allowed to be re-occupied.

The 4-stage re-occupation test is a legal requirement as detailed in the Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012 (CAR 2012).

When licensed asbestos removal work is planned by both the end-client and the Licensed Asbestos Removal Contractor (LARC), sufficient time has to be allowed to complete the re-occupation test. This time is in addition to the time taken for actually removing the asbestos containing material(s) and can range from a few hours to 2-3 days depending on the complexity of the area affected. Planning this time is critical as delays may hold up other works and other contractors.

What is a 4-stage re-occupation test?

This is a series of tests carried out after licensed asbestos removal and before the affected area is handed back to the client for re-occupation. (Licensed asbestos removal is usually undertaken inside a sealed enclosure).

Its purpose is to ensure all proposed asbestos removal work has been carried out as per the pre-agreed Plan of Works, and that the area is clean, dry and dust free, as far as is reasonably practicable, and therefore fit for re-occupation.

Why do this test?

The 4-stage re-occupation test is a legal requirement as detailed in the Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012 (CAR 2012) Regulation 17.

Who can conduct the test?

The test can only be undertaken by a United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS) accredited testing laboratory accredited to ISO 17025. This requirement is also highlighted in CAR 2012 Regulation 20.

To avoid any perceived conflict of interest, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has long held the view that the analytical company contracted to carry out the 4-stage re-occupation test should be employed independently by the end-client.

What is the process for a 4-stage re-occupation test?

As the name suggests there are four separate tests / stages which are carried out by a qualified analyst. These are:

Stage 1 - Preliminary check of site condition and job completeness

The areas examined are:

- ▶ The plan of work (method statement)
- ▶ The transit and waste route (the route to and from waste skips and decontamination unit)
- ▶ The decontamination unit (the mobile unit used for decontamination including showering)
- ▶ Areas surrounding where the work has been undertaken
- ▶ Inside the enclosed area, by viewing from outside using the vision panel, or CCTV provided

When the analyst carrying out the test is happy that it has met the criteria for Stage 1 he/she will move onto Stage 2.

Stage 2 - A thorough visual inspection

This will entail:

- ▶ An examination of where the asbestos had been
- ▶ All surfaces inside the enclosure
- ▶ Ensuring the enclosure is clean, dry and dust free as far as is reasonably practicable

The time spent on this stage will depend on the size and complexity of the enclosure and in some cases, may require more than one analyst to carry out the inspection.

Stage 3 - Clearance air monitoring

Air sampling will be conducted inside the enclosure to:

- ▶ Ensure the airborne fibre concentration is below 0.010 fibres per cubic centimetre

All surfaces are brushed vigorously for a minimum of 1.5 minutes per sampling location. When the air test has been carried out and the fibre concentration deemed to be less than 0.010 fibres per cubic centimetre the enclosure can be dismantled.



Stage 4 - Final assessment post-enclosure / work area dismantling

After the enclosure/work area has been carefully removed the analyst will undertake the final assessment:

- ▶ Check the area for any asbestos containing materials that may have been hidden when Stage 2 was undertaken. *
- ▶ Ensure that all materials used for erecting the enclosure have been removed and disposed of correctly.

*If during this inspection any residual asbestos is identified from the removal works the enclosure may have to be re-built and the asbestos residue removed.

What is supplied to state that re-occupation is approved?

A re-occupation certificate will be issued by the analyst to both the Licensed Asbestos Removal Contractor and the end-client. Photographic evidence of each stage should be provided to support this final re-occupation certification.

NOTE

The 4-stage re-occupation test is described in 'The Analysts Guide' HSG 248 which currently is being updated by HSE. A draft of the new guide is available from the HSE website on www.hse.gov.uk

Additional requirements in the draft guide are:

- ▶ The time spent conducting the visual inspection (Stage 2)
- ▶ The use of photographic evidence at each stage of the test
- ▶ An official handover of the enclosure from the Licensed Removal Contractor to the analytical company