

Understanding re-occupation testing

What clients need to know before they can move back in



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 typically 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 is an explicit legal requirement by virtue of Regulation 20, CAR 2012. To avoid any perceived conflict of interest, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) strongly recommend that the analyst for site clearance certification is independently sourced and employed by the building owner or occupier (i.e. building client) in control of the premises.

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

Before starting the 4-stage re-occupation test a signed handover form should be obtained by the analyst from the licensed contractor confirming that the work area/enclosure has been thoroughly cleaned and the area has been inspected and is visually clean. After signing and dating the handover form the analyst can begin the 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

- ▶ Confirm scope of work
- ▶ Obtain or prepare diagram showing areas requiring clearance
 - Decontamination Unit
 - Enclosure, surrounding areas, waste and transit routes
 - Integrity of enclosure
 - Interior of enclosure using viewing panels / CCTV

Estimate time thorough visual inspection will take and record it on Certificate for Reoccupation (CfR)

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:

- ▶ A thorough visual inspection inside the enclosure
- ▶ Check
 - The completeness of the removal of Asbestos Containing Materials (ACM's) from the underlying surfaces
 - For any visible debris including in the airlock and baglock (all compartments)
 - For the presence of settled dust on all surfaces within the enclosure
- ▶ Ensuring the enclosure is dry 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:

- ▶ Disturb surfaces at the start of air sampling
 - By sweeping floors with a long handled brush
 - By brushing other surfaces using a short handled brush
 - Brush sweep for at least 1½ minutes per sample
- ▶ All air sample results must be <0.010 fibres/cm³

All surfaces are brushed vigorously for a minimum of 1½ minutes per sampling location. When the air test has been carried out and the fibre concentration deemed to be less than 0.010 fibres/cm³ 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:

- ▶ Visually inspect where the enclosure was located *
- ▶ Reinspect waste and transit routes for asbestos debris

* 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.

The 4-stage re-occupation test is described in 'The Analysts' Guide' HSG 248 Second Edition available at www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/hsg248.htm