

DIY and Asbestos

There are around 30 television programs in the UK which are dedicated to repairing domestic homes and historical properties. These range from small-scale “Do It Yourself” type repairs (under presumably professional guidance) to the complete renovation of entire properties.

In each program, it is clear that a pattern is being followed;

1. Either the householder has started a project and has ‘run out of money’, or;
2. A dilapidated property is being upgraded, or;
3. A rogue builder has started a project and has failed to finish it.

The single issue affecting all of these programs is the lack of clear Health and Safety guidelines, specific to asbestos. There is never evidence of an invasive/intrusive Asbestos Refurbishment Survey (a legal requirement in the UK for all works in all properties which pre-date the year 2000).



We have witnessed broken asbestos cement sheets being moved, and on one occasion directly beside children. We have also witnessed drilling and hammering work through walls which are intact; in other words there is no evidence of pre-start invasive asbestos surveying.

It is often assumed that program makers will be alive to the requirements of Health and Safety, and seek guidance where appropriate. On our evidence, it seems they are one of many industries for whom asbestos guidance might well be overdue.

It must be remembered that the tradespeople on those programs are at work, undertaking the tasks assigned to them by a project manager, or program maker. Asbestos does not discriminate, and these tradespeople could easily be contaminating entire buildings and contents, within which families are residing and other people are working, living and filming.

Are we facing a situation where the HSE will assign staff to watch television for a breach of asbestos regulations?

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