

27 September 2017

FAQ's – Refurbishment Surveys

As an asbestos consultancy we frequently get asked questions which usually have more than one answer. Here we feature some FAQ's on Refurbishment Surveys.

Question 1: There are some 'No Access' areas in the survey report which may be affected by the works?

'No Access' areas should be justified and agreed with the Client and documented in the survey report. In Refurbishment Surveys, the area and scope of the work will need to be agreed between the Duty holder and the Survey Company. In both Refurbishment Surveys and Demolition Surveys there should be no restrictions on access unless the site is unsafe (e.g. fire damaged premises) or access is physically impractical.

There are several reasons why a 'No Access' may be present in a report, some of which are explained below;

- *There may be specialist requirements in order to access i.e. confined spaces.*
- *Voids - which can only be accessed by going through known asbestos containing materials. e.g. a ceiling known to contain Asbestos. This will require the attendance of a licenced removal contractor to form an access hole to allow the void behind to be inspected.*
- *Areas where keys were not available - this should be easy to resolve if the keys can be located*
- *Live Equipment- would need to be isolated by a qualified electrician prior to it being surveyed*
- *Timber ceilings- would need to be excessively damaged to allow access beyond them*

Question 2: The scope for the R&D was based on the drawings listed

*Are these drawings current or has the extent of the proposed works changed?
Refurbishment works scope often changes throughout the project, it is important to ensure your asbestos survey carried out at the start of a project covers the areas you are working in.*

Question 3: The plans highlights the areas that have been sampled, it looks like some rooms have not been surveyed?

Just because a room doesn't have an entry it doesn't mean that it hasn't been surveyed, it just means that nothing suspect was identified within the room.

Question 4: Why does the area being surveyed need to be vacant when conducting an R&D/ Demolition survey

Refurbishment and demolition surveys should only be conducted in unoccupied areas to minimise risks to the public or employees on the premises. Ideally, the building should not be in service and all furnishings removed.

For minor refurbishment, this would only apply to the room involved or even part of the room where the work is small and the room large. In these situations, there should be effective isolation of the survey area (e.g. full floor to ceiling partition), and furnishings should be removed as far as possible or protected using sheeting.

The 'surveyed' area must be shown to be fit for reoccupation before people move back in. This will require a thorough visual inspection and, if appropriate (e.g. where there has been significant destruction), reassurance air sampling with disturbance.

Under no circumstances should staff remain in rooms or areas of buildings when intrusive sampling is performed.

Question 5: How long before a project starts should I carry out the Refurbishment Survey?

Most surveying companies will have a standard mobilisation of two weeks and a report turnaround after completion on site of two weeks, depending on the size of the survey, a minimum of 1 month should be allowed for the survey to be undertaken and reported.

Once the report is issued ACMs will need to be removed if likely to be disturbed by the proposed works. Depending on the quantity of ACMs the time needed for removals will vary and a contractor tender stage with site visit should also be allowed for, which could take approximately 2 weeks.

Licensed ACMs require a 2 week notification to be submitted to the HSE prior to works commencing.

It is now recognised that even with 'complete' access demolition surveys, all ACMs may not be identified and this only becomes apparent during demolition itself.

Question 6: Is a refurbishment survey more costly than a Management Survey and if so why?

A Refurbishment Survey can be more expensive than a Management Survey. Due to the more destructive and intrusive nature of the survey, more time is required to cover the area and investigation, hence increasing the cost. Additionally specialist access equipment may also be included in the price. Other factors which can increase the cost are items such as welfare facilities if the site is derelict.

Question 7: What ACM's should be removed following a Refurbishment or Demolition Survey?

In cases of final demolition or major refurbishment of premises, the plan of work must, so far as is reasonably practicable, specify that asbestos must be removed before any other major works begin, unless removal would cause a greater risk to employees than if the asbestos had been left in place.

Where the refurbishment or demolition work will not take place for a significant period after the survey (e.g. three months), then the information required for a management survey should be obtained.

Enquin Environmental is a team of independent, qualified and highly experienced asbestos consultants, with full UKAS accreditation. We provide our clients with impartial, practical advice, guidance, surveying and analytical services throughout the UK.

For further information and advice on managing asbestos, please contact us on 029 20 535090 or e mail asbestos@enquin.co.uk