



Who should you commission to carry out your surveys for asbestos?

There are many companies that provide consultancy and surveying services, sometimes at what initially appears to be at low cost. However, before commissioning an organisation to undertake such work it is important to consider the risks:

- Are you confident that the organisation has the technical competence to undertake the work in question?
- Are you satisfied that the organisation has the resources to do the work?
- Are the surveyors working to suitable codes of conduct to ensure inspections are carried out impartially and with integrity?
- Are you confident that the organisation has an adequate quality system in place?
- Are you satisfied that safeguards are in place, e.g. suitable liability insurance, in case difficulties arise?

The Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012 (CAR 2012) and more specifically Regulation 4: Duty to manage asbestos in non-domestic properties sets a legal requirement for owners and occupiers of non-domestic buildings to carry out a suitable assessment to determine whether asbestos is present or liable to be present.

The HSE is responsible for enforcing compliance with the regulations and penalties are awarded to persons who fail to ensure the safety of their staff and others present on site.

Selecting an organisation accredited by the United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS) will ensure that you are appointing a competent surveying organisation that will understand and meet your requirements.



Accreditation: Ensuring technical competence

The accreditation process determines the technical competence and integrity of organisations providing inspection, testing, calibration and certification services.

UKAS is the sole national accreditation body, recognised by Government, to assess these types of organisations against international standards. It provides an independent and authoritative declaration that the organisation carrying out the survey has the people, facilities, technical expertise, management systems and track record to undertake the activity professionally and competently.

“HSE strongly recommends the use of an accredited surveyor.”



ISO 9001 is no guarantee of technical competence



It is important to specify the appropriate requirements on suppliers according to the type of work required. For example, you can be confident in the technical competence of an asbestos surveying organisation if it holds UKAS accreditation to ISO/IEC 17020, the internationally recognised standard that sets out the requirements for organisations performing inspection. UKAS accredited certification of a supplier's management system to ISO 9001 tells you that they have arrangements for managing the quality of their product or service, but it doesn't relate to their technical competence.

The Accreditation Process



UKAS currently accredits over 100 asbestos inspection bodies to carry out surveys. Accreditation is a rigorous and ongoing assessment to ISO/IEC 17020 of an asbestos surveying organisation to establish that:

- The organisation is impartial
- The organisation employs technically competent staff
- The organisation has the appropriate resources and facilities
- The organisation is performing to the required standard

Technical Competence



The organisation must demonstrate that individuals carrying out surveys are technically competent to do so. This is demonstrated through:

- Qualifications attained (P402 as a minimum)
- Internal training
- Routine competence monitoring
- Internal auditing to include witnessed survey performance by a qualified auditor
- Quality control of surveys through programme of resurveying properties representative of general business e.g. types of premises

Organisation & Management



The organisation must demonstrate that:

- It has appropriate liability insurance
- It operates a Code of Conduct
- It has implemented processes for working safely
- It has a process to manage contract review to ensure that customer requirements are fully understood, the work is adequately resourced, and any deviations to the work are immediately brought to the attention of the client
- It has a complaints process (with referral to UKAS if not satisfied)

Independence, Impartiality and Integrity



The organisation must demonstrate that:

- Surveys are carried out independently and impartially. UKAS looks for sufficient safeguards to ensure that links to other bodies (such as removal contractors) do not influence the survey or any subsequent recommendations
- Integrity is being maintained by all staff at all levels through contractual obligation to written codes of conduct. Such safeguards are necessary to ensure that inspections are undertaken with sufficient impartiality and that recommendations on the treatment of discovered asbestos materials are appropriate to given situations.

What are the risks of using a non-accredited inspection Body?

- Inexperienced staff – competence is built on qualifications, knowledge and experience (P402 alone is not a demonstration of competence)
- Insufficient resource leading to inadequate and incomplete surveys and possibility of missing asbestos products especially those that are not immediately obvious by sight alone
- Unclear reports and inappropriate recommendations for remedial action
- A lack of impartiality
- No comeback (no formal complaints procedure, no higher authority)
- Lack of due diligence/exposure to future claims
- Possible insurance gaps



As a purchaser, it is essential that we get what we ask for. UKAS accreditation is a pre-requisite whenever we are choosing an organisation to work with to help us manage asbestos. We do not look for UKAS accreditation in one area of asbestos management. We would look for it in all areas that can be accredited. The reasons for using a UKAS-accredited company are manifold. Firstly, it is a way of ensuring the quality of the work. Secondly, we are dealing with the management of asbestos in schools and offices, and so there are clearly reputational issues at stake as well. Using a UKAS accredited organisation is not going to necessarily increase the price of procuring a particular service. A UKAS accredited organisation will offer value for money. The cost of getting it wrong and re-working is phenomenally expensive. This would not be the best use of rate payers' money. It is much cheaper to get it right first time.

Hampshire County Council

A full list of UKAS-accredited asbestos surveyors can be found at www.ukas.com

Further information can be obtained from the HSE and UKAS websites. Alternatively contact UKAS Corporate Communications:

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www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos and www.ukas.com



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