

## Asbestos repair and maintenance issues

By David McPherson

I have read with interest various articles regarding managing asbestos on farms in editions of the Countryside Building magazine written by Tony Hutchison. Managing asbestos effectively is an extremely important issue, and one that will have serious consequences for farmers and others in the rural sector.

If you are going to carry out maintenance or repair operations to any parts of your buildings (i.e. replacing asbestos-cement roof sheets) then the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 1994 (as amended) will apply. Regulation 2 makes this quite clear.

It is interesting to note that surveying work is excluded from CDM. Accessing fragile roofs for inspection and surveying in confined spaces is a dangerous and hazardous operation. Perhaps this aspect of CDM should be revisited. Have you considered carrying out a risk assessment and writing a method statement prior to undertaking survey work?

Any type of construction work (including repair and maintenance) poses serious hazards, from asbestos, manual handling, falls, vehicular movements and collapses for example. Each year many people die in accidents and even more suffer ill health. The risks to health and safety from these hazards must be properly controlled. All those involved must give the management of health and safety a high priority, and CDM is an important part of the equation.

As a farmer client or employer, you must ensure that the contractor you engage to carry out the work prepares a health and safety plan before construction work begins. You must also ensure that the contractor you appoint is competent and has adequate resources. In most cases, demonstration of a successful track record in similar work should be sufficient indication.

Contractors must identify hazards and assess the risks relating to their work. The health and safety plan helps to provide an integrated approach to the management of health and safety. To provide a basis for safe construction including maintenance work, the plan must clearly explain the actions needed to control key risks and provide details of good working practice.

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