



With the Covid-19 pandemic rumbling on through 2020 it will be some time before it's full impact on the property industry will be felt. The enforced changes in working practices, remote working in particular, are likely to be adopted as the norm for many of us and is surely going to change property use for some time to come. Now more than ever it is important for property owners and managers to be on top of their asbestos compliance.



Vacant properties

As properties are vacated, the duty to manage asbestos will revert to the landlord or their agents as the duty holder. This should precipitate a handover of information from the outgoing tenant but depending on the nature of the departure this may not always be the case. So what does the law require of the landlord/agent in this instance?

In the absence of a suitable management survey report then there is a statutory requirement to complete an asbestos management survey. How quickly should this be undertaken? There is no grace period offered by the legislation, therefore as soon as is practicable should always be the case.

Certain property types however should be looked at with a little more urgency. Older and industrial properties are higher risk and can often be left in poor condition by outgoing tenants. Given that there will be a need to send surveyors and possibly contractors into vacant property to carry out delapidations assessments and preliminary clearance works, the need for a survey here would be rather more urgent.

Taking control of compliance for vacant properties is essential in preparing for the next steps.



New lettings

As the saying goes – “if you stay ready, you never have to get ready”. Asbestos compliance is an increasingly important aspect of pre-contract enquiries for lettings, so having a suitable and more crucially an up to date asbestos management survey already prepared is essential in “staying ready”.

But what if the property is no longer fit for purpose? The city centre landscape is going to change as a result of the pandemic with property utilisation likely to change significantly with a re-purposing of vacant space over the short to medium term.

Landlord works to refit, refurbish, improve and develop property prior to letting will require a different approach. Refurbishment surveys will be required prior to undertaking any works that will disturb the fabric of a building. There have been several property company prosecutions following the undertaking of works without a refurbishment survey in place where potential exposures have occurred.

Procuring a refurbishment survey in good time ahead of any tendering for the main works scheme should be high on the list of project priorities. Ensuring the full scope of the refurbishment is understood by the surveying organisation is a critical step in the process and should involve both client and surveying organisation engaging in a desk study approach to ensure the survey meets all of the project requirements.

Preparing in advance will improve the ultimate outcome – a competent surveying organisation will consult with you to make sure that the survey completed will be suitable and sufficient. This type of surveying represents the most significant risk and in terms of asbestos risk, refurbishment projects provide for the greatest opportunity for asbestos materials to be accidentally disturbed.



William Martin Compliance can assist you in maintaining your asbestos compliance or in helping you with non-compliant properties. We have a national team of highly competent surveying professionals, able to respond to urgent requirements and have extensive experience in asbestos surveying across all property types.

For more information please contact us
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