



Man Made Mineral Fibres (MMMMF) Safe Working Practices

MMMMFs are all amorphous silicates and are of three main varieties:-

- rock wool;
- slag wool; and
- glass wool/glassfibre.

The fibres are longer than 5mm and the length to diameter ratio is 3:1 or more MMMF. MMMF is used for insulation and, because of this use and because they are fibres, they have been confused in many people's minds with asbestos. The risks are quite different: asbestos is a known dangerous material. The known problems with MMMF are relatively few and not in the same order of seriousness as asbestos-related problems. However, the HSE has adopted a control limit for man-made mineral fibres in gravimetric terms of 5mg m⁻³ of "total" dust. In addition, certain special superfine glassfibre materials - and any others where there is a significant content of very fine fibres - are subject to a limit of 1 fibre ml⁻¹ of air (which is still double the limit for white asbestos). Sampling and evaluation of airborne man-made mineral fibre concentrations should be done using methods as for particulate dusts and fumes.

The resins in the glassfibre/wool may cause contact eczema (dermatitis) in a few people. These people should be seen by a doctor to confirm the diagnosis and it may be necessary that they be removed from contact. The fumes from the resins may also cause a sensitisation rash. Again, medical opinion should be sought and further contact should be questioned.

NOSE AND THROAT

Transient irritation with rhinitis (nose running) may be caused by dusty conditions. Long term effects are unlikely. Irritant dust should be minimised by appropriate occupational hygiene measures.

IN SUMMARY

MMMMFs do not today appear to present a serious long-term hazard. In the short term, glassfibres may cause skin sensitisation in a few people; skin irritation which passes off in many people; and, if dust levels are high, irritant effects. Rock and slag wool do not appear to have short term effects.