



Asbestos: a collaboration between the UK and Chile

Roger Willey

www.acsrisk.com

Cristian Ramirez

www.brisa.cl

Overview

What the establishment of the first asbestos accredited laboratory in Chile.

Why for sound economic and social reasons.

How how an earth did we manage it from 8000 miles?

Background

- Brisa Large industrial waste management company in Santiago. Managed by Cristian Ramirez.
- From about 2010 relatively new, but growing, problem of asbestos contaminated waste.
- No proper expertise/knowledge in asbestos management in Chile.

Background

- No proper legislation, what little there is is not risk based.
- No Codes of Practise, No Guidance Notes.
- No Standards.
- Much like the UK in 1977 when RW started his work.

Problems for BRISA

- No standard technique for asbestos identification or for fibre counting..
- National Laboratory unable to reliably analyse ACMs or measure airborne fibre concentrations.
- BRISA send samples to USA for analysis
TEM used: Cost \$350 to \$500, 7 to 10 days turn around.

Problems for BRISA

- Delays in starting and completing contracts.
- Many contracts not commercially viable.
- Contracts which do go ahead: no agreed method to monitor airborne fibre concentrations.
- No agreed method to monitor risk control measures – putting workers and public at risk.

What Next ?

- After extensive research in South America C.R. decided to look to Europe, particularly the UK.
- Came to London to attend the European Asbestos Forum in late 2017, organised by Dr Yvonne Waterman.
- CR and RW met repeatedly at Workshops and CR requested assistance from RW.

What next?

- Santiago is approx. 7600 miles from Glasgow.
- From previous work in Japan, Nigeria, Turkey and the USA, RW is very well aware of the problems of long distance collaborations.
- In Jan 2018 (some 5 weeks after London) RW travels to Chile to meet key people.
- **Opinion: absolutely essential you need to look into people's eyes.**

Agreement, but....

- **Essential** to have all agreements “up front” i.e. before any work is carried out.

Some examples:

Memorandum of Understanding;

Confidentiality Agreement;

Financial Agreement;

Communications – format, freq., records.

Time consuming but essential.

Develop the Programme

- Review current legislation in Chile (poor).
- Review current guidance (almost non existent).
- Need to meet with Authorities to discuss needs, requirements and philosophy.
- Difficult to organise and extremely time consuming. **Only possible through existing excellent relations and trust.**

The Kick Start

- RW visits Chile again in Oct 2019.
- Series of seminars to staff of Brisa and the Regulatory body for labs in Chile.
- The UK system & philosophy, Car 2012, Reg 4 etc. etc.
- Techniques of analysis, costs, times, standards, HSG 248 & 264, ISO 17020/25

Eventual Agreement

- Lengthy discussions
- Lots of meeting, particularly with CR after RW departure.
- Quite difficult.
- Very time consuming.



Then a Disaster

- Covid struck in Dec 2019, just after the Agreement.
- Total lock down in March 2020 which lasted until Dec 2021.
- No flights between Chile and UK.
- RW and CR unable to continue with programme of visits to each others labs.

The Window

- In early 2020 RJW/ACS transfer all necessary equipment to Chile to establish the lab (microscopes, fume hoods, etc).
- CR obtains premises and fits out lab., office, training area, comms, etc.

Immediate Problems

- No facilities in Chile for training, supply of consumables, servicing and calibration of equipment.
- All requirements provided remotely by ACS from Glasgow.
- CR uses the Covid down time to develop contacts and specialist suppliers – mostly outside Chile.

Post Covid Lock Down

- Face to face extensive training carried out in Glasgow and Santiago (mixture of lab and theory).
- Arrange for BOHS training/exams in UK.
- Set up systems for internal QA and QC, (followed by HSE AIMS and RICE), audits, calibrations. Write Quality Manuals to be BRISA specific.

Post Covid

- RW returned to Chile in Nov 2022 to carry out a full audit of the systems (based on 23 yrs of UKAS audits of ACS)
- Following some remediation work, application for Accreditation by INN was made in mid 2023.

INN

- Instituto Nacional de Normalisation.
- The Chilean Accreditation Body equivalent to UKAS.
- Founded in 1944.
- One of 25 founding countries of the International Organization for Standardisation (ISO).
- Member of International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (ILAC)

The Result

- Accreditation to ISO 17020 and 17025 was granted by INN in early June 2024.
- This is the first accredited asbestos test house in Chile.
- Believed to be one of the first (if not **the** first) in South America.

What Next?

- Very obvious need for asbestos training at all levels.
- Brisa introduced to the extensive portfolio of high quality courses provided via UKATA.
- Becomes first UKATA approved Asbestos Training Centre in South America.
- Currently working on translation of courses into Spanish for a wider audience.

What next

- Brisa are in constant communication with the Institute and have developed very good relations.
- Brisa staff are currently training lab staff of the institute to set up an asbestos test division in the Chilean National Laboratory.
- CR has been asked to join the national group of Regulators to advise on a National Programme.

Acknowledgement

- None of this would have happened without the foresight and hard work of Dr Waterman in establishing the European Asbestos Forum and running the Conferences (particularly the London one!!!)

THANK YOU YVONNE

Was it worth all the hassle?

- Two families, almost 8000 miles apart, and from very different backgrounds, have become the best of friends.
- We have visited each other's homes and countries and shared magnificent sites.
- Most importantly, with the help of INN, UKAS and UKATA, we are going to save a lot of pain, death and misery in South America.

YOU BET IT WAS WORTH IT !!!!

