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ROYAL COLLEGE of PODIATRY

Guide for private podiatry businesses

Handling suspected RAAC in buildings

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The Authority	Professional Support Royal College of Podiatry Quartz House 207 Providence Square Mill Street London SE1 2EW
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Understanding RAAC

RAAC (Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete) is a lightweight, precast concrete commonly used in construction from the 1950s to the 1980s.

Over time, RAAC can deteriorate, posing structural risks. If your building contains RAAC, it is crucial to address the issue promptly to ensure safety.

If you do not own your building, you should liaise with your landlord to find out what their plans are for assessing and dealing with RAAC if found.

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Steps to take if RAAC is suspected

1) **Initial identification**
    - **Visual inspection:** look for signs of RAAC in the building structure, typically in roofs, floors, or walls. RAAC panels are usually light grey and have a bubbly, aerated appearance
    - **Historical records:** check building plans and maintenance records to identify if RAAC was used during construction.

2) **Immediate actions**
    - **Do not disturb:** avoid making any structural changes or disturbances to suspected RAAC materials
    - **Isolate the area:** restrict access to areas where RAAC is suspected, especially if signs of deterioration are visible
    - **Contact your building insurer:** your insurance company may cover the cost of inspecting your building for RAAC and any repair which is associated with it.

3) **Engage a structural engineer**
    - **Professional assessment:** contact a licensed structural engineer with experience in RAAC to conduct a thorough inspection (see resources)
    - **Testing and analysis:** the engineer may need to take samples and perform tests to confirm the presence and condition of RAAC.

4) **Develop an action plan**

    Based on the structural engineer's report, formulate a plan which may include:
    - **Regular monitoring:** implement a schedule for regular inspections to monitor the condition of the RAAC

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- **Reinforcement:** consider reinforcing the existing RAAC structures to improve their stability and safety
- **Replacement:** in severe cases, plan for the replacement of RAAC with safer, modern materials.

5) **Notify relevant authorities**

Depending on local regulations, you may need to inform building control or other relevant authorities about the presence of RAAC and your planned course of action.

6) **Communicate with staff and patients**

- **Staff training:** ensure staff are aware of the potential risks and understand the safety protocols in place
- **Patient notification:** inform patients of any disruptions or safety measures, assuring them of their safety and the steps being taken to address the issue.

7) **Implement safety measures**

If RAAC is confirmed, implement necessary safety measures:

- **Load restrictions:** limit loads and weight-bearing activities in areas with RAAC
- **Temporary supports:** use temporary supports to enhance structural integrity until permanent solutions are implemented.

8) **Repair or replacement work**

- **Hire qualified contractors:** engage contractors experienced in handling RAAC to perform any repair or replacement work
- **Follow safety protocols:** ensure all work complies with safety regulations and guidelines.

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9) **Post-repair inspection**

- **Final assessment:** have the structural engineer conduct a final inspection to ensure all repairs or replacements have been completed correctly and safely.
- **Certification:** obtain certification or documentation from the engineer verifying the safety and stability of the building post-repair.

10) **Maintain records and compliance**

- **Documentation:** keep detailed records of all inspections, assessments, repairs, and communications related to RAAC
- **Compliance:** ensure ongoing compliance with building safety regulations and update procedures as necessary.

11) **Continual monitoring and maintenance**

- **Regular inspections:** continue regular inspections of the building to monitor the condition of any remaining RAAC and other structural elements
- **Proactive maintenance:** address any signs of wear or deterioration promptly to prevent future risks.

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Resources and Contacts

For further assistance, consider reaching out to:

- **Structural engineers**: professionals licensed in RAAC assessment and repair. You can find qualified engineers through the **Institution of Structural Engineers**
- **Local building authorities**: for regulations and reporting requirements, contact your local government office
- **Industry associations**: organisations that provide guidelines and support for managing RAAC. The **Local Government Association** and the **Health and Safety Executive** offer comprehensive resources and guidance.

By leveraging these resources, your podiatry business can ensure a thorough and effective response to any RAAC-related concerns, safeguarding your practice's environment and the wellbeing of everyone involved.

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References

1) **Health and safety executive** "RAAC guidance" **Link**
2) **Institution of structural engineers** "Managing RAAC" **Link**
3) **Local government association** "RAAC in public buildings" **Link**
4) **National health service** "RAAC and healthcare facilities" **Link**
5) **Department for education** "RAAC in schools" **Link.**