Removing asbestos cement (AC) debris

What this sheet covers

This sheet describes good practice when you need to clear up AC. This includes decontamination following a fire.

This sheet is NOT appropriate for cleaning debris from damaged asbestos lagging, insulation or insulating board. Use an HSE-licensed contractor for such work.

For fly-tipped AC waste, see sheet a38.

Preparing the work area

- Ensure safe access.
- Restrict access - minimise the number of people present.
- Close doors. Use tape and notices to warn others.
- Ensure adequate lighting.

Caution: AC roofs are always fragile and cannot bear weight.

Equipment

- Warning tape and notices;
- Scoop, trowel or scraper;
- Adhesive tape;
- Garden-type sprayer containing wetting agent;
- Bucket of water and rags;
- Asbestos waste container, eg labelled polythene sack; and
- Clear polythene sack.

Personal protective equipment (PPE) - see sheet em6

Provide:
- Disposable overalls fitted with a hood; and
- Boots without laces (laced boots are hard to decontaminate).
- A respirator is not normally required if there are only a few pieces of contamination in a small area, or the pieces are damp.
- For larger or heavily contaminated areas, a respirator is required.

Procedure

Caution: Make sure the debris is AC only.

- Clean up visible contamination in occupied areas, eg houses and gardens nearby. In large contaminated areas, eg following a fire, you may be unable to remove all the AC.
- Dampen the AC debris with spray.
SAFETY CHECKLIST

✓ Can you avoid disturbing asbestos by doing the job in some other way?
✓ Do you need a licence for the work?
✓ Always follow all legal requirements.
✓ Follow the task guidance sheet.
✓ Use an asbestos waste container.
✓ Dispose at a licensed disposal site.

Caution:
■ Don’t sweep up dust or debris - use a Class H vacuum cleaner or damp rags.
■ Don’t take used overalls home.
■ Don’t re-use disposable PPE.
■ Don’t smoke.
■ Don’t eat or drink in the work area.

MORE HELP

■ Licensed asbestos contractors, and training providers - HSE’s Infoline
  Tel: 0845 345 0055 Textphone: 0845 408 9577 e-mail: hse.infoline@natbrit.com
  and at www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/licensing/index.htm
■ HSE priced and free publications - HSE Books Tel: 01787 881165 and at www.hsebooks.co.uk
■ Qualified hygienists - The British Occupational Hygiene Society (BOHS) Tel: 01332 298101 and at www.bohs.org.uk/ under ‘Professional > Consultants’
■ Trade associations - the Asbestos Removal Contractors Association (ARCA) Tel: 01283 531126
  Website: www.arcaweb.org.uk, or the Asbestos Control and Abatement Division (ACAD) Tel: 01325 466704
■ More asbestos pictures - www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/gallery.htm
■ Help to decide if work is licensed - www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/licensing/index.htm

OTHER HAZARDS

■ Pick up larger pieces of debris. Put them in the waste container.
■ [For debris on rough surfaces, keep it damp and scoop or scrape it into the waste container.
■ [Clean contaminated surfaces with damp rags, then put these in the waste container.
■ [Press adhesive tape onto small dust deposits, then put the tape in the waste container.
■ If necessary, repair the AC - see sheet a13.
■ [Put used rags and other waste in the asbestos waste container and tape it closed.
■ [Put the asbestos waste container in a clear polythene sack and tape it closed.
■ Disposal - see sheet em9.

Personal decontamination

■ See sheet em8

Clearance and checking off

■ Visually inspect the area to make sure that it has been cleaned properly.
■ Clearance air sampling is not normally required.
■ Get the premises owner, duty-holder or client to check off the job.

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

Download and follow these advice sheets from www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/essentials/index.htm:

em1 What to do if you uncover or damage materials that could contain asbestos
em2 Training
em5 Wetting asbestos materials
em6 Personal protective equipment (PPE)
em7 Using damp rags to clean surfaces of minor asbestos contamination
em8 Personal decontamination
em9 Disposal of asbestos waste

This document is available at www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/essentials/index.htm

© Crown copyright This publication may be freely reproduced, except for advertising, endorsement or commercial purposes. First published as part of Asbestos Essentials Task Manual 2001. Please acknowledge the source as HSE.

Published by the Health and Safety Executive 12/07

This guidance is issued by the Health and Safety Executive. Following the guidance is not compulsory and you are free to take other action. But if you do follow the guidance you will normally be doing enough to comply with the law. Health and safety inspectors seek to secure compliance with the law and may refer to this guidance as illustrating good practice.