Removing asbestos cement (AC) sheets, gutters, etc and dismantling a small AC structure

What this sheet covers

This sheet describes good practice when you need to remove AC sheets, gutters, drains, ridge caps, etc on a small scale, or dismantle a small structure (eg shed or garage).

This sheet does NOT apply for large scale work or mechanical demolition. See HSE's website for asbestos non-licensed contractors' guides.

This sheet is not appropriate if other asbestos-containing materials are present, eg lagging, limpet or insulating board. Use an HSE-licensed contractor for such work.

Preparing the work area

Ensure safe access - you may need a mobile access platform.
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

500- and 1000-gauge polythene sheeting and duct tape;
warning tape and notices;
bolt cutter;
webbing straps and rope;
garden-type sprayer containing wetting agent;
bucket of water and rags;
asbestos waste container, eg labelled polythene sack;
clear polythene sack;
lockable skip for larger quantities of waste; and
asbestos warning stickers.

Personal protective equipment (PPE) - see sheet em6
Provide:
- disposable overalls fitted with a hood;
- boots without laces (laced boots are hard to decontaminate); and
- respiratory protective equipment.
Procedure

- Check with the premises owner that only AC is present.
- Protect nearby surfaces from contamination. Cover with 500-gauge polythene sheeting and fix with duct tape to non-asbestos surfaces.

Caution: It is dangerous to seal over exhaust vents from gas-fired equipment. Can the equipment be turned off?

Overlaying AC sheets

- Can you overlay sheets with non-asbestos material instead of removing the AC?
- If so, attach the material to existing purlins. Avoid drilling through the AC. If you cannot avoid drilling, see sheet a9.

Removal

- Avoid or minimise breaking the AC.
- If fasteners hold the sheets in place, dampen and remove them, and place them in the waste container.
- If the sheets are bolted in place, dampen and cut the bolts while avoiding contact with the AC.
- Remove the bolts or fixings carefully and place them in the waste container.
- Unbolt, or use cutters to release gutters, drain pipes, ridge caps, etc. Avoid contact with the AC.
- Lower large pieces to the ground. Don’t drop them or use rubble chutes. Stack sheets carefully.
- Where there are several AC sheets and other large items, place them in a lockable skip.
- Double-wrap large pieces in 1000-gauge polythene sheeting. Seal with duct tape.
- Attach asbestos warning stickers.
- Place small pieces in the asbestos waste container.

Caution: Avoid crushing AC debris on the ground.

Cleaning and disposal

- Clean the equipment and the area with damp rags.
- Check for debris in fasteners or bolt holes. Clean with damp rags.
- Put debris, used rags, polythene sheeting and other waste in the asbestos waste container and tape it closed.
- Dispose of contaminated webbing and rope as ‘asbestos waste’.
- 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.

Further information

  ISBN 978 0 7176 1425 7
- Working with asbestos cement HSG189/2 HSE Books 1999
  ISBN 978 0 7176 1667 1

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/ 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
- Disposal of asbestos waste - www.environment-agency.co.uk,
  www.sepa.org.uk/, or www.netregs.gov.uk/netregs.
- More asbestos pictures and help to decide if work is licensed or to find a surveyor for an asbestos survey -
  www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/index.htm

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

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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.