Removing asbestos-containing mastic, sealant, beading, filler, putty or fixing

What this sheet covers

This sheet describes good practice when when you need to remove mastics, etc that contain asbestos

If you also need to remove small areas of textured coating, see sheet a28.

This sheet is NOT appropriate if the material is attached to asbestos insulating board or lagging. Use an HSE-licensed contractor for such work.

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.

Equipment

- 500-gauge polythene sheeting and duct tape;
- warning tape and notices;
- Class H vacuum cleaner (BS EN 60335) - see sheet em4;
- sealant, eg polyvinyl acetate (PVA);
- scraper, trowel, hand drill;
- heat source (for some mastics);
- bucket of water and rags;
- paintbrush;
- asbestos waste container, eg labelled polythene sack; and
- clear polythene sack.

Personal protective equipment (PPE)

- Provide:
  - disposable overalls fitted with a hood; and
  - boots without laces (laced boots are hard to decontaminate).
- A respirator is not normally required.

Procedure

Caution: Don’t use power tools.

- Protect nearby surfaces from contamination. Cover with 500-gauge polythene sheeting and fix with duct tape to non-asbestos surfaces.
- Can you remove the part rather than scraping off the asbestos-containing material?
- Gently scrape up adhering mastic. You can soften mastic with solvent, by warming with an infra-red lamp, or embrittle it with dry ice.
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 -
  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
- em4 Using a Class H vacuum cleaner for asbestos
- em5 Wetting asbestos materials
- em7 Using damp rags to clean surfaces of minor asbestos contamination
- em8 Personal decontamination
- em9 Disposal of asbestos waste

OTHER HAZARDS

There may also be other hazards - you need to consider them all.

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.

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.

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

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Scrape off mastic into the waste container.
For plaster-based materials, dampen them thoroughly with water and scrape off using ‘shadow vacuuming’ - see sheet em4.
For asbestos ‘Rawlplugs’, dampen and drill out using ‘shadow vacuuming’.
Paint newly exposed surfaces with sealant.

Cleaning and disposal

- Clean the area and equipment with the Class H vacuum cleaner and damp rags.
- Put debris, used rags, polythene sheeting, paintbrush 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.