

# a37

## asbestos essentials

### Non-licensed tasks

This information will help employers and the self-employed to comply with the Control of Asbestos Regulations 2006.

It is also useful for trade union and employee safety representatives.

Asbestos fibres can cause lung cancer and lung diseases.

The sheet covers the points you need to follow to reduce exposure to an adequate level.

It can act as a risk assessment for asbestos if it matches what you plan to do.

Follow all the points, or use equally effective measures.

Only carry out this work if you are properly trained and have the right equipment.

#### Main points

- Asbestos fibres can kill.
- Keep exposures low using all the controls in this sheet.
- Also follow sheet a0 and equipment and method (em) sheets; see 'Essential information'.



Tape mastic

# 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](mailto:hse.infoline@natbrit.com)  
and at [www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/licensing/index.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/licensing/index.htm)
- **HSE priced and free publications** -  
HSE Books Tel: 01787 881165  
and at [www.hsebooks.co.uk](http://www.hsebooks.co.uk)
- **Qualified hygienists** - The  
British Occupational Hygiene  
Society (BOHS) Tel: 01332 298101  
and at [www.bohs.org/](http://www.bohs.org/) under  
'Professional > Consultants'
- **Trade associations** - the Asbestos  
Removal Contractors Association  
(ARCA) Tel: 01283 531126 Website:  
[www.arcaweb.org.uk](http://www.arcaweb.org.uk), or the Asbestos  
Control and Abatement Division (ACAD)  
Tel: 01325 466704
- **Disposal of asbestos waste** -  
[www.environment-agency.co.uk](http://www.environment-agency.co.uk),  
[www.sepa.org.uk/](http://www.sepa.org.uk/), or  
[www.netregs.gov.uk/netregs](http://www.netregs.gov.uk/netregs).
- **More asbestos pictures and help  
to decide if work is licensed** -  
[www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/index.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/index.htm)

### ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

- Download and follow these advice sheets from [www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/essentials/index.htm](http://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*

- 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.

### OTHER HAZARDS

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

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.

### 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 document is available at [www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/essentials/index.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/essentials/index.htm)

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