

# ao asbestos essentials

## Non-licensed tasks

### Some trades likely to disturb asbestos

Anyone who works on the fabric of a building, may be at risk of disturbing asbestos. This includes:



- electricians, joiners, plumbers, gas fitters, shop fitters, heating and ventilation engineers;



- labourers, roofers, plasterers, demolition workers and other workers in construction;



- phone and data engineers, alarm installers; and

- surveyors, general maintenance engineers, painters and decorators.

## Advice to managers and sole traders on 'Asbestos essentials'

### Introduction to task sheets for non-licensed work

## What is asbestos, why is it a problem?

Large amounts of asbestos were used in new and refurbished buildings before 2000. Usage began to decline in the 1970s and blue asbestos (crocidolite) had a voluntary ban in 1970. Blue and brown (amosite) asbestos were banned by law in 1985. Uses of white asbestos (chrysotile) were banned in 1999. Everything else, and most second-hand supply (except for very high performance materials) was banned by 2000.

A large number of premises still contain some form of asbestos. Workers most likely to come into contact with asbestos-containing products are those in the construction, maintenance, refurbishment and related trades.

When asbestos materials are damaged or disturbed they can release dangerous fibres which, if breathed in, can cause serious diseases. Around 4000 people in Great Britain die every year from asbestos-related diseases making asbestos the single greatest cause of work-related deaths.

### What you need to do

- Ask to see a plan and check what asbestos is present. If unsure, assume that any material you need to disturb does contain asbestos. The client also needs to see your plan of work to understand what work you are going to do, and how.

### Your workers

- Everyone who works with, or may disturb asbestos, must be properly trained. See sheet em2.

### What the premises owner (client) needs to tell you

- Where any asbestos containing materials (or materials presumed to contain asbestos) are, that you are likely to meet.

## Disease

**Disturbing asbestos-containing material can result in release of invisible fibres. Once in the air, fibres can be breathed in and cause lung diseases including:**

- **mesothelioma - a cancer of the linings to the lungs and stomach;**
- **lung cancer; and**
- **asbestosis - lung scarring.**

**There are no sudden changes in health after breathing in fibres - these diseases can take from 15 to 60 years to develop. They are incurable and often fatal. You need to protect yourself now to prevent contracting an asbestos related disease in the future.**

## Working on asbestos-containing materials

**Asbestos fibres are more likely to be released if the following happens:**

- **Asbestos-containing materials are not identified before work starts.**
- **Work is poorly planned or badly carried out.**
- **You work on dry asbestos-containing materials.**
- **You use power tools or saws.**
- **You sweep up asbestos-containing debris.**

**Asbestos-containing materials may be left in place, as long as they do not and will not put anyone at risk of exposure to asbestos fibres.**

## Main points:

- You need training to work safely with asbestos-containing materials. See sheet em2.
- *Asbestos Essentials* does not apply to licensed work. Only go ahead if you are sure the work does not require a licence.
- Work with, or disturbance of, any type of asbestos-containing material can be dangerous.
- Second-hand equipment may not be asbestos-free.
- If you work on asbestos-containing materials and you smoke, you are at much greater risk of lung cancer.
- Consider those around you. Don't put your workmates in danger or take fibres home on your clothes and put your family at risk.
- Carry out the work and dispose of contaminated materials safely.

### Licensed work Don't touch this!



*Limpet/sprayed asbestos*



*Lagging*



*Damaged asbestos insulating board*

### Non-licensed work Do this if you are trained



*Asbestos cement sheets or guttering*



*Textured coating*



*Gaskets or rope seals*

**If you have any doubts, carry out a risk assessment (see 'More help') or ask the client to employ an HSE-licensed asbestos contractor.**

## OTHER HAZARDS

Other specific hazards appear in the checklist on each Asbestos essentials task sheet. They include:

**Work on fragile roofs** - see [www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/geis5.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/geis5.htm). Fragile roofs cannot bear weight.

**Work at height** - see [www.hse.gov.uk/falls/index.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/falls/index.htm). Take precautions to avoid falls. Must you work from a ladder? Where necessary, erect an access platform.

**Electrical hazards** - see [www.hse.gov.uk/electricity/index.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/electricity/index.htm). Get a competent electrician to isolate and reconnect electricity supply.

**Manual handling** - see [www.hse.gov.uk/msd/index.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/msd/index.htm). Plan how to remove and handle heavy material and articles safely.

**Slips and trips** - see [www.hse.gov.uk/slips/index.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/slips/index.htm). Floors protected with polythene become very slippery when wet.

**Confined spaces** - see [www.hse.gov.uk/confinedspace/index.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/confinedspace/index.htm). You need to know that restricted workplaces are safe to enter and the air is fit to breathe.

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

## Planning

### Before carrying out any work:

- Ask the premises owners for their records of asbestos; what was checked, what was found, and what was not checked.
- If there is no record and you have reason to suspect asbestos, ask for an asbestos survey to be done before accepting the contract.
- Check if the work could require a licence. See 'Useful links'.
- When a licence is not needed for the work, follow the task sheets or other HSE guidance.
- If there is no task sheet for the work, get help from a competent health and safety advisor.
- When you seek advice, ensure that the person providing that advice is competent.
- If asbestos-containing material needs replacement, the replacement must be asbestos-free.

Prepare a plan of work. Make sure it includes the following:

- What the work is, and how long it is likely to last.
- The address and description of the job.
- When the work will be done.
- The procedures to follow to reduce exposure and prevent the spread of asbestos.
- The equipment needed, including personal protective equipment (PPE).
- Decontamination and waste disposal arrangements.
- Emergency procedures.

Make sure that everyone involved is fully aware of the plan and knows:

- what they need to do;
- why each action is being taken; and
- what to do in the case of emergencies and accidents.

**Caution: Emergency call-out is no excuse for low standards or cutting corners.**

## Disposal of asbestos materials and waste

'Hazardous' or 'Special' Waste needs safe disposal. This includes:

- asbestos;
- materials containing asbestos; and
- anything contaminated with asbestos unless fully decontaminated.



Make sure you double-bag and label asbestos waste.

For advice on disposal contact the Local Authority, the Environment Agency or, if based in Scotland, SEPA. Or hire a licensed waste contractor. See 'More help'

### MORE HELP

- You can get details of licensed asbestos removal contractors, licence holders and training providers from 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 are available from HSE Books Tel: 01787 881165 Website: <http://books.hse.gov.uk/hse/public/home.jsf>
- Contact the Asbestos Testing and Consultancy (ATAC) who are a division of the Asbestos Removal Contractors Association (ARCA). ARCA also have a list of members who can hire equipment and offer training and other services. [www.arcaweb.org.uk](http://www.arcaweb.org.uk). Tel: 01283 531126;
- Contact the Asbestos Control and Abatement Division (ACAD) Tel: 01325 466704;
- Contact your trade association.
- The British Occupational Hygiene Society (BOHS Tel: 01332 298101 You can find a list of qualified hygienists on their website at [www.bohs.org/](http://www.bohs.org/) under 'Professional > Consultants'
- For advice on disposing of asbestos and other waste go to [www.gov.uk/government/organisations/environmental-agency](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/environmental-agency), [www.sepa.org.uk/](http://www.sepa.org.uk/), or [www.netregs.gov.uk/netregs](http://www.netregs.gov.uk/netregs).
- These task sheets and equipment and method (em) sheets can be downloaded free from [www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/essentials/index.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/essentials/index.htm)
- Take a look at some images of common uses of asbestos on [www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/gallery.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/gallery.htm)
- HSE's online risk assessment to see if the tasks you need to carry out requires a licence is at [www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/essentials/index.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/essentials/index.htm)

### Asbestos essentials task sheets

- A0** Advice for sole traders and managers  
Introduction to task sheets for non-licensed work
- A1** Drilling holes in asbestos insulating board (AIB)
- A2** Removing a single (screwed in) asbestos insulating board (AIB) ceiling tile
- A3** Removing a door with asbestos insulating board (AIB) fireproofing
- A4** Removing a single asbestos insulating board (AIB) panel less than 1m<sup>2</sup>, fixed with nails or screws
- A5** Cleaning light fittings attached to asbestos insulating board (AIB)
- A6** Repairing minor damage to asbestos insulating board (AIB)
- A7** Painting undamaged asbestos insulating board (AIB)
- A8** Enclosing undamaged asbestos materials to prevent impact damage
- A9** Drilling holes in asbestos cement (AC) and other highly bonded materials
- A10** Cleaning debris from guttering on an asbestos cement (AC) roof
- A11** Removing asbestos cement (AC) debris
- A12** Cleaning weathered asbestos cement (AC) roofing and cladding
- A13** Repairing damaged asbestos cement (AC)
- A14** Removing asbestos cement (AC) sheets, gutters, etc and dismantling a small AC structure
- A15** Removing an asbestos cement (AC) or reinforced plastic product, eg tank, duct, water cistern
- A16** Painting asbestos cement (AC) sheets
- A17** Removing asbestos paper linings
- A18** Removing asbestos friction linings
- A19** Removing an asbestos fire blanket
- A20** Laying cables in areas containing undamaged asbestos materials
- A21** Removing asbestos-containing bituminous products
- A22** Removing metal cladding lined with asbestos-containing bitumen
- A23** Removing asbestos-containing floor tiles and mastic
- A24** Removing flexible asbestos textile duct connectors (gaiters)
- A25** Removing compressed asbestos fibre (CAF) gaskets and asbestos rope seals
- A26** Drilling and boring through textured coatings
- A27** Inserting and removing screws through textured coatings
- A28** Removing textured coating from a small area, eg one square metre
- A29** Clearing up debris following collapse of a ceiling or wall covered with textured coating
- A30** Removing an asbestos-containing 'Arc shield' from electrical switchgear
- A31** Removing a single asbestos-containing gas or electric heater
- A32** Replacing an asbestos-containing part in a 'period' domestic appliance
- A33** Replacing an asbestos-containing fusebox, or a single fuse assembly
- A34** Removing pins and nails from an asbestos insulating board (AIB) panel
- A35** Replacing an asbestos cement (AC) flue or duct
- A36** Removing an asbestos cement (AC) panel outside, beside or beneath a window
- A37** Removing asbestos-containing mastic, sealant, beading, filler, putty or fixing
- A38** How to deal with fly-tipped asbestos waste

**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.**

The information in the task sheets will help small businesses - subcontractors and sole traders - to comply with the Control of Asbestos Regulations 2006. It also helps duty-holders, clients, trade union and employee safety representatives know how work should be done.

Most work with asbestos-containing materials, including lagging, insulation and insulating board, must be done by an HSE-licensed contractor.

*Asbestos essentials* covers work that will not need a licence if carried out just as the sheets describe. Each sheet describes 'good practice' for a particular task and covers the action needed to reduce exposure to an adequate level.

It is important to follow all the actions in the task sheet, or use equally effective measures. Following the sheets is not a guarantee of safety.

### 'Sporadic and low intensity exposure'

Normally, non-licensed work includes work on asbestos-containing textured coatings, asbestos cement, on some other asbestos-containing materials, and certain work of 'short duration' on asbestos insulating board.

'Short duration' means any one person does this type of work for less than one hour, or more people can do the work for a total of less than two hours, in any seven consecutive days. The total time spent by all workers must not exceed two hours. This includes time spent setting up, cleaning and clearing up.

### Equipment and Method sheets

- EM1** What to do if you uncover or damage materials that may contain asbestos
- EM2** Training
- EM3** Building and dismantling a mini-enclosure
- EM4** Using a Class H vacuum cleaner for asbestos
- 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
- EM10** Statement of cleanliness after textured coating removal



*Don't create dust if you can avoid it*



*Using a Class H vacuum cleaner and a drill cowl*

### 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)

© Crown copyright This publication may be freely reproduced, except for advertising, endorsement or commercial purposes. First published 2007. Please acknowledge the source as HSE.

Published by the Health and Safety Executive 12/07