HSE

Health and Safety Executive

a12

asbestos essentials

Non-licensed tasks

This information will help employers, including the self-employed, comply with the Control of Asbestos Regulations 2006, to control exposure and protect health.

It is also useful for trade union representatives.

Asbestos fibre causes lung cancer and lung diseases.

This sheet describes good practice when you need to clean asbestos cement cladding and roofing, either to improve its appearance or to prepare it for a surface coating.

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

It is important to follow all the points, or use equally effective measures.

Only carry out this work if you are properly trained.

This sheet is not appropriate for cleaning asbestos insulating board.

Use an HSE-licensed specialist contractor for such work.

Main points

- **Asbestos fibres can kill.**
- **Keep exposures low using all the controls in this sheet.**
- **See also sheets em1, em2, em6, em7 and em8.**

Cleaning weathered asbestos cement (AC) roofing and cladding

Access
- Take precautions to prevent the risk of falling if this work is at height.
- Where necessary, erect an access platform.
- Minimise the number of people present.
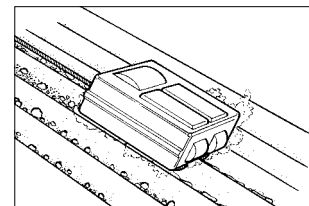- Restrict access - use warning tape and notices.

Equipment
- 500-gauge polythene sheeting and duct tape;
- warning tape and notices;
- approved biocide - see 'Useful links';
- proprietary cleaning machine;
- scraper;
- garden-type sprayer;
- bucket of water and rags; and
- asbestos waste container, eg labelled polythene sack.

Moss and lichen growth on asbestos cement

Cleaning machine

Personal protective equipment (PPE)
- Provide:
  - disposable overalls fitted with a hood (you may need waterproof overalls for work outside);
  - boots without laces (laced boots are hard to decontaminate);
  - protective gloves (biocides may irritate skin). Select single-use nitrile gloves. If you must use latex gloves, select only 'low protein powder-free' gloves; and
  - a disposable particulate respirator (FF P3) for manual scraping and for operating the filtration system - see sheet em6.

- A respirator is not normally needed for an operator who is well away from the cleaning machine.

Procedure
- Prevent slurry entering the building. Seal gaps into the building with polythene sheeting, secured with duct tape.

  Caution: It is dangerous to seal over exhaust vents from gas-fired equipment. Can the gas be turned off?
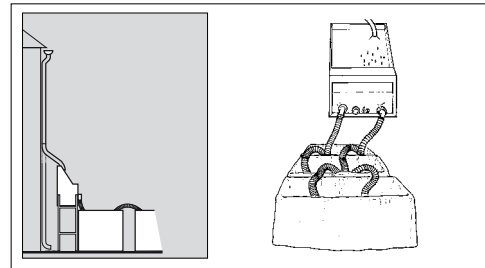
- If necessary, remove debris first - see sheet a11.
- Specialist contractors are required for high pressure jetting; this should be done only in exceptional circumstances.

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Method 1: Cleaning cladding accessible from ground level
- Prepare the biocide according to the instructions on the label. Apply it by low pressure sprayer.
- Allow time for the biocide to work - check the product label.
- Keep the surface wet and remove growths by gentle scraping. Dead plant roots are hard to remove - leave these in place.
- Put debris in the waste container.

Method 2: Employ a specialist roof cleaning contractor
- This method creates a lot of slurry that must be collected for disposal.
- The contractor should:
  - divert the slurry through a collection and filtration system;
  - keep solid waste wet and put it in the waste container;
  - flush out the slurry collector with clean water.

The contractor should use a collection and filter system

Cleaning
- Clean the equipment and the area with wet rags.
- Put debris, used rags, polythene sheeting and other waste in the waste container.
- Tape the container closed.

Personal decontamination
See sheet em8.

Clearance procedure
- Visually inspect the area to make sure that it has been cleaned properly.
- Clearance air sampling is not normally required.

Essential information
Download and follow these advice sheets:
- em1 *What to do if you uncover or damage asbestos materials*
- em2 *Training*
- em6 *Personal protective equipment (PPE)*
- em7 *Using rags to clean surfaces and equipment contaminated with asbestos*
- em8 *Personal decontamination*

Safety Checklist

✓ Can you avoid disturbing asbestos by doing the job in some other way?

✓ Do you need a license for the work?

✓ Always follow all legal requirements.

✓ Follow the task guidance sheet.

✓ Make sure other risks (eg work at height, manual handling) are assessed and controlled.

✓ Use only suitable asbestos waste containers.

✓ Double-wrap asbestos waste.

✓ Take asbestos waste to a licensed tip.

Caution:

■ Don't sweep up dust or debris - use a Type H vacuum cleaner or wet rags.

■ Don't take used overalls home.

■ Don't re-use disposable PPE.

■ Don't smoke.

■ Don't eat or drink in the workplace.

Further information

■ *Tower scaffolds* Construction Information Sheet CIS10 (rev4) HSE Books 2005 Web only version available at www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/cis10.pdf
■ *General access scaffolds and ladders* Construction Information Sheet CIS49 (rev1) HSE Books 2003 Web only version available at www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/cis49.pdf
■ *Health and safety in roof work* HSG33 (Second edition) HSE Books 1998 ISBN 0 7176 1425 5

Useful links

■ For information about health and safety ring HSE's Infoline Tel: 0845 345 0055 Textphone: 0845 408 9577 e-mail: hse.infoline@natbrit.com.
■ HSE priced and free publications are available from HSE Books Tel: 01787 881165 Website: www.hsebooks.co.uk.
■ British Standards are available from BSI Customer Services, 389 Chiswick High Road, London W4 4AL Tel: 020 8996 9001 Fax: 020 8996 7001 e-mail: cservices@bsi-global.com Website: www.bsi-global.com.
■ For a list of approved surface biocides see www.hse.gov.uk/pesticides/bluebook/section10.pdf

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

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.