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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 explains how to use rags to clean minor asbestos contamination from smooth surfaces and equipment.

Main points

- Read the safety checklist on the task sheet.
- You must be trained to work safely with asbestos materials.
- Use each wet rag surface once only.

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.

Using rags to clean surfaces and equipment contaminated with asbestos

Equipment and method sheet

Equipment

- Bucket of water
- Either cotton rags that do not leave bits onto clean surfaces, or impregnated rags (eg 'Tak' rags).
- Adhesive tape, to collect small dust deposits.
- Asbestos waste container eg labelled polythene sack

Procedures

- Pick up bigger pieces of debris and put them in a suitable waste container.

Rags

- Impregnated rags do not need soaking.
- Soak the rag in water. Fold in half or quarters. Wring it out.
- Wipe the contaminated surface.
- Re-fold the rag to give a clean surface.
- Repeat until you have used all the clean surfaces of the rag.
- Put the used rag in a bag. Get a clean rag, and repeat cleaning until all surfaces are clean.

Caution: Never re-soak a contaminated rag. This will contaminate the water.

Tape

- Tape is useful only for removing small dust deposits. Surfaces may need repeated tape applications.
- Place a strip of tape over the contaminated surface. Peel it off slowly.
- Put the used tape in a bag. Repeat with a fresh piece.

Wastes

- Put bags of used rags and tape in a suitable asbestos waste container.
- If you avoid contaminating the bucket of water, no special precautions are needed for water disposal.
- Tape the container closed.

Useful links

- HSE priced and free publications are available from HSE Books Tel: 01787 881165 Website: www.hsebooks.co.uk.
- HSE's Infoline Tel: 0845 345 0055 Textphone: 0845 408 9577 e-mail: hse.infoline@natbrit.com.

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

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