

em5 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 why you must wet asbestos materials before working on them, and how to do this.

The spraying technique can also be used when painting or sealing asbestos materials.

Main points

- Read the safety checklist on the task sheet.
- You must be trained to work safely with asbestos materials.
- The asbestos material must be wet. Otherwise you may be exposed to high concentrations of asbestos fibres.

Wetting asbestos materials

Equipment and method sheet

Equipment

- Wetting agent - for suppliers, see 'Useful information', or you could use liquid detergent as an alternative; and
- sprayer, either a garden type spray or a low pressure spraying machine less than 3.4 bar (50 psi).

Caution: You need a low spray pressure to minimise the disturbance of fibres.

Procedures

- Wet the asbestos materials first. Don't work on dry asbestos materials.
- Wetting agents make it easier to dampen them. Note, blue and brown asbestos don't absorb water easily.
- Some asbestos materials - eg board, sheet - cannot be wetted all the way through. So, you need other methods to control dust exposure, eg Type H vacuum cleaner.
- Vacuuming up very wet material will damage the cleaner's HEPA filter.

Caution: Some tasks will be carried out at height. You must make sure that wetting does not create a slipping risk.

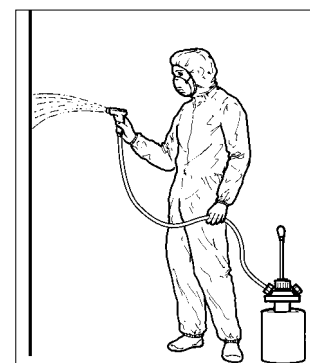
Possible problems

- Wetting agents may cause dermatitis - read the safety data sheet or label
- Avoid toxic or flammable wetting agents.
- Isolate all electrical equipment. Or use a Type H vacuum cleaner instead of wetting. See sheet em4.

Wetting

- Spraying is the preferred wetting method.
- Dilute the wetting agent with water according to the manufacturer's instructions. This is usually 10-15 parts water to 1 part wetting agent, or 8 parts water to 1 part liquid detergent.
- Spray carefully to avoid disturbing the asbestos, or leaving dry patches.
- Allow the spray to 'fall' onto the asbestos material - not hit it as a jet.
- Use a slow backwards and forwards motion. Avoid concentrating on any one area - this can disturb the asbestos material.

Caution: Do not over-wet.



Spray using a low-pressure sprayer if possible

Useful links

- HSE priced and free publications are available from HSE Books
Tel: 01787 881165 Website: www.hsebooks.co.uk.
- For information on wetting agent suppliers contact:
 - Asbestos Removal Contractors Association (ARCA) Website:
www.arcaweb.org.uk
 - Asbestos Control and Abatement Division (ACAD) Website:
www.tica-acad.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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