

# a9

## 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'.

## Drilling holes in asbestos cement (AC) and other highly bonded materials

### What this sheet covers

This sheet describes good practice when you need to drill holes in asbestos cement, bitumen products, floor tiles or other highly-bonded materials containing asbestos.

For asbestos insulating board, see sheet a1.  
For textured coatings, see sheet a26.

### Preparing the work area

- Ensure safe access.
- Restrict access - minimise the number of people present.
- Close doors. Use tape and notices to warn others.
- If feasible, also restrict access to the rear of asbestos material. If drilling a roof from outside, segregate the area beneath.
- If access to the rear is not possible, warn the building owner that this area is contaminated.
- Ensure adequate lighting.

### Equipment

- 500-gauge polythene sheeting and duct tape;
- warning tape and notices;
- drill - manual or powered, set at the lowest speed;
- drill bit, or hole cutter for holes greater than 20 mm diameter;
- thick paste, eg wallpaper paste or shaving foam, or a proprietary device to contain drilling debris;
- mastic or sealant for gaps;
- plastic or metal sleeve to protect hole edges;
- bucket of water and rags;
- asbestos waste container, eg labelled polythene sack; and
- clear polythene sack.



Asbestos cement tiles on a roof



Interior floor tiles

### 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:**

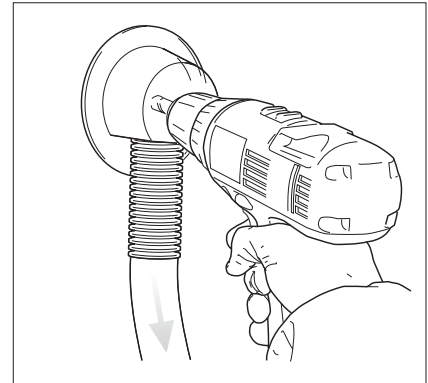
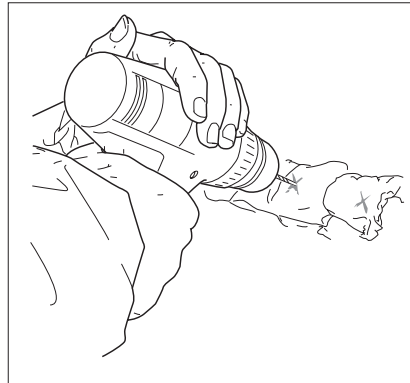
- Don't sweep up dust or debris - use a Class H vacuum cleaner or damp rags.
- Don't take used overalls home.
- Don't reuse disposable PPE.
- Don't smoke.
- Don't eat or drink in the work area.

### OTHER HAZARDS

**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.

**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.

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



Drill through paste, foam or a cowl connected to a Class H vacuum cleaner.

### Personal protective equipment (PPE) - see sheet em6

- Provide:
  - disposable overalls fitted with a hood;
  - boots without laces (laced boots are hard to decontaminate); and
  - respiratory protective equipment.



### Procedure

- Protect nearby surfaces from contamination. Cover with 500-gauge polythene sheeting and fix with duct tape to non-asbestos surfaces.
- Cover the drilling point and the rear (if accessible) with masking tape to prevent the edges crumbling.
- For cable and pipework, make the hole slightly bigger than required.
- Cover the drill entry and if accessible, exit points, with a generous amount of paste, foam or a proprietary device.
- Drill through the paste, foam or device.
- Clean off the paste, foam and debris with damp rags. Or remove the device and clean the surface. Clean the back surface with damp rags, if accessible.
- Rags and paste or foam contain dust and fibres. Dispose of as asbestos waste.
- Seal the drilled edge with sealant.
- Insert a sleeve to protect the hole's edges from cabling, etc.

### Cleaning and disposal

- Clean the equipment and the area with 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

### MORE HELP

- **More asbestos pictures** - [www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/gallery.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/gallery.htm)
- **Help to decide if work is licensed** - [www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/licensing/index.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/licensing/index.htm)
- For information about health and safety, or to report inconsistencies or inaccuracies in this guidance, visit [www.hse.gov.uk/](http://www.hse.gov.uk/). You can view HSE guidance online or order priced publications from the website. HSE priced publications are also available from bookshops.
- These task (a) 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)
- See sheet a0 for details of more guidance.

### 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.

### 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*
- em6 *Personal protective equipment (PPE)*
- em7 *Using damp rags to clean surfaces of minor asbestos contamination*
- em8 *Personal decontamination*
- em9 *Disposal of asbestos waste*

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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Published by the Health and Safety Executive 03/11

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.