Cleaning weathered asbestos cement (AC) roofing and cladding

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

This sheet is not appropriate for cleaning asbestos insulating board. Use an HSE-licensed contractor for such work.

Preparing the work area
- Ensure safe access.
- Restrict access – minimise the number of people present.
- Use tape and notices to warn others.

Equipment
- 500-gauge polythene sheeting and duct tape
- Warning tape and notices
- Approved biocide
- Scoop or trowel
- Scraper
- Proprietary cleaning machine
- Garden-type sprayer containing wetting agent
- Bucket of water and rags
- Asbestos waste bag
- Clear polythene bag

Moss and lichen growth on AC roofing and gutters
Caution
AC roofs are always fragile and cannot bear weight.

Caution
It is dangerous to seal over exhaust vents from gas-fired equipment. Can the equipment be turned off?

Other hazards
Work at height – see www.hse.gov.uk/work-at-height. Take precautions to avoid falls.
There may be other hazards – you need to consider them all.

Personal protective equipment (PPE) – see sheet em6
- Provide:
  - disposable overalls fitted with a hood (you may need waterproof overalls);
  - boots without laces (laced boots are hard to decontaminate);
  - protective gloves. Select single use gloves;
  - a disposable particulate respirator (eg FF P3) for manual scraping and for operating the filtration system.
- 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.
- If necessary, remove debris first – see sheet a11.
- Only in exceptional circumstances is high-pressure jetting appropriate. This requires a specialist contractor.

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.
- Scoop debris into the asbestos waste bag.

Method 2: Employ a specialist roof cleaning contractor with a cleaning machine
- 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 bag;
  - flush out the slurry collector with clean water.

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 bag and tape it closed.
- Put the asbestos waste bag in a clear polythene bag and tape it closed.
- Disposal – see sheet em9.
Personal decontamination

See sheet em8.

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, dutyholder or client to check off the job.