Removing asbestos cement (AC) sheets, gutters etc and dismantling a small AC structure

What this sheet covers

This sheet describes good practice when you need to remove AC sheets, gutters, drains, ridge caps etc on a small scale, or dismantle a small structure (eg shed or garage).

This sheet does NOT apply for large scale work or mechanical demolition. A risk assessment and plan of work will need to be prepared.

This sheet is not appropriate if other asbestos-containing materials are present, eg lagging, limpet or insulating board. Use an HSE-licensed contractor for such work.

Preparing the work area

- Ensure safe access – you may need a mobile access platform.
- Restrict access – minimise the number of people present.
- Close doors. Use tape and notices to warn others.
- Ensure adequate lighting.

Caution: AC roofs are always fragile and cannot bear weight.

Equipment

- 500- and 1000-gauge polythene sheeting and duct tape
- Warning tape and notices
- Bolt cutter
- Webbing straps and rope
- Garden-type sprayer containing wetting agent
- Bucket of water and rags
- Asbestos waste container, eg labelled polythene sack
- Clear polythene sack
- Lockable skip for larger quantities of waste
- Asbestos warning stickers

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**

- Check with the premises owner that only AC is present.
- Protect nearby surfaces from contamination. Cover with 500-gauge polythene sheeting and fix with duct tape to non-asbestos surfaces.

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

**Overlaying AC sheets**

- Can you overlay sheets with non-asbestos material instead of removing the AC?
- If so, attach the material to existing purlins. Avoid drilling through the AC. If you cannot avoid drilling, see sheet a9.

**Removal**

- Avoid or minimise breaking the AC.
- If fasteners hold the sheets in place, dampen and remove them, and place them in the waste container.
- If the sheets are bolted in place, dampen and cut the bolts while avoiding contact with the AC.
- Remove the bolts or fixings carefully and place them in the waste container.
- Unbolt, or use cutters to release gutters, drain pipes, ridge caps etc. Avoid contact with the AC.
- Lower large pieces to the ground. Don’t drop them or use rubble chutes.

**Cleaning and disposal**

- Clean the equipment and the area with damp rags.
- Check for debris in fasteners or bolt holes. Clean with damp rags.
- Put debris, used rags, polythene sheeting and other waste in the asbestos waste container and tape it closed.
- Dispose of contaminated webbing and rope as ‘asbestos waste’.
- Put the asbestos waste container in a clear polythene sack and tape it closed.

**Personal decontamination**

- See sheet em8.

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**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.

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**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.
- **Electrical hazards** – see [www.hse.gov.uk/electricity/index.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/electricity/index.htm). Get a competent electrician to isolate and reconnect electricity supply.
- **Manual handling** – see [www.hse.gov.uk/msd/index.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/msd/index.htm). Plan how to remove and handle heavy material and articles safely.
- **Confined spaces** – see [www.hse.gov.uk/confinedspace/index.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/confinedspace/index.htm)
- **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.

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**Cut the bolts while avoiding contact with the asbestos cement**

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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.

Further information