Removing an asbestos-containing ‘Arc shield’ from electrical switchgear

What this sheet covers

This sheet describes good practice when you need to remove an arc shield.

Preparing the work area

- Have a competent electrician isolate and lock off the electricity supply, and test to show that the system is not live.
- Restrict access - minimise the number of people present.
- Close doors. Use tape and notices to warn others.
- Ensure adequate lighting.

Equipment

- 500-gauge polythene sheeting and duct tape;
- warning tape and notices;
- Class H vacuum cleaner (BS 8520) - see sheet em4;
- screwdriver and spanners;
- non-asbestos replacement arc shield;
- bucket of water and rags;
- asbestos waste container, eg labelled polythene sack; and
- clear polythene sack.

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

- Pre-clean the area. Vacuum, then wipe surfaces with damp rags.
- Protect nearby surfaces from contamination. Cover with 500-gauge polythene sheeting and fix with duct tape to non-asbestos surfaces.

Removal

- Unbolt or unscrew using ‘shadow vacuuming’ - see sheet em4.
- Remove the bolts or fixings carefully and place them in the waste container.
- Loosen and remove the arc shield. Put it in the waste container.
- Gently scrape off residues using ‘shadow vacuuming’ - see sheet em4.
- Vacuum clean and wipe all surfaces.
- Install the new arc shield.
Cleaning and disposal

- Clean the equipment and the area with damp rags.
- Put used rags, polythene sheeting 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.

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.

Other hazards

Electrical hazards - see www.hse.gov.uk/electricity/index.htm. Get a competent electrician to isolate and reconnect electricity supply.

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

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.

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.

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

Download and follow these advice sheets from www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/essentials/index.htm:

em1 What to do if you uncover or damage materials that could contain asbestos
em2 Training
em4 Using a Class H vacuum cleaner for asbestos
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

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