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 bag
- Clear polythene bag

Personal protective equipment (PPE) – see sheet em6
- Provide:
  - disposable overalls fitted with a hood;
  - boots without laces (laced boots are hard to decontaminate);
  - respiratory protective equipment (RPE).

Procedure
- Pre-clean the area. Vacuum and 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.
Other hazards

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

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

Removal
- Unbolt or unscrew using ‘shadow vacuuming’ – see sheet em4.
- Remove the bolts or fixings carefully and place them in the waste bag.
- Loosen and remove the arc shield. Put it in the waste bag.
- Vacuum clean and/or 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 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.