Removing a single asbestos-containing gas or electric heater

What this sheet covers

This sheet describes good practice when you need to remove:
- a single gas heater (catalytic, radiant, coal- or log-effect); or
- an electric heater (storage, radiant, etc).

This sheet is NOT appropriate if the work involves asbestos insulating board and lasts more than one hour a week for a worker, or more than two hours in total for 2 or more workers. Use an HSE-licensed contractor for such work.

You must use a Gas Safe-registered engineer to disconnect and make safe gas appliances.

Preparing the work area

- Have a competent electrician to isolate the appliance from the electricity supply.
- Restrict access - minimise the number of people present.
- Close doors. Use tape and notices to warn others.
- Ensure adequate lighting.

Equipment

- 500- and 1000-gauge polythene sheeting and duct tape;
- warning tape and notices;
- Class H vacuum cleaner (BS 8520) - see sheet em4;
- screwdriver and spanners;
- garden-type sprayer containing wetting agent;
- bucket of water and rags;
- asbestos waste container, eg labelled polythene sack;
- asbestos warning stickers; 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.
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 use disposable PPE.
- Don’t smoke.
- Don’t eat or drink in the work area.

Procedure

- Can you remove and dispose of the appliance intact?

Caution: Some catalytic heaters contain loose asbestos mats.

Preparation
- Remove furniture and fittings from the area, or protect them from contamination using 500-gauge polythene sheet.
- Protect nearby surfaces from contamination. Cover with 500-gauge polythene sheeting and fix with duct tape to non-asbestos surfaces.
- Check if the appliance is attached to asbestos insulating board (AIB); sometimes, this is wall-mounted behind heaters.

Removal
- Remove the cover, wipe it with damp rags and set it aside.
- Vacuum inside the appliance. Remove with vacuuming all loose material or articles.
- Dampen the parts that may contain asbestos, eg panels, board, paper, string and fire cement.
- Unscrew or unbolt fixed parts using shadow vacuuming - see sheet em4. Put the fixings in the waste container.
- Remove panels or parts intact and put them in the waste container.
- Vacuum inside the carcass before removal. If it is attached to AIB, unscrew it using shadow vacuuming. Put the screws in the waste container.
- If fixed to AIB, see sheet a6 for repairing minor damage.
- Double-wrap the carcass and the cover with 1000-gauge polythene sheeting. Seal with duct tape. Attach asbestos warning stickers.

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.

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.

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More Help

- More asbestos pictures - www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/gallery.htm
- Help to decide if work is licensed - www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/licensing/index.htm
- Gas Safe Register - check your contractor's registration at www.gassaferegister.co.uk/
- For information about health and safety, or to report inconsistencies or inaccuracies in this guidance, visit 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
- See sheet a0 for details of more guidance.

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
em5 Wetting asbestos materials
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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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.