

# a31

## asbestos essentials

### Non-licensed tasks

This information will help employers and the self-employed to comply with the Control of Asbestos Regulations 2006.

It is also useful for trade union and employee safety representatives.

Asbestos fibres can cause lung cancer and lung diseases.

The sheet covers the points you need to follow to reduce exposure to an adequate level.

It can act as a risk assessment for asbestos if it matches what you plan to do.

Follow all the points, or use equally effective measures.

Only carry out this work if you are properly trained and have the right equipment.

### Main points

- Asbestos fibres can kill.
- Keep exposures low using all the controls in this sheet.
- Also follow sheet a0 and equipment and method (em) sheets; see 'Essential information'.

## 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 reuse disposable PPE.
- Don't smoke.
- Don't eat or drink in the work area.

### OTHER HAZARDS

**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.

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

### 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.

### MORE HELP

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

### 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.

### ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

**Download and follow these advice sheets from [www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/essentials/index.htm](http://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](http://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.