Removing asbestos-containing mastic, sealant, beading, filler, putty or fixing

What this sheet covers
This sheet describes good practice when you need to remove mastics, etc that contain asbestos

If you also need to remove small areas of textured coating, see sheet a28.

This sheet is NOT appropriate if the material is attached to asbestos insulating board or lagging. Use an HSE-licensed contractor for such work.

Preparing the work area
- Ensure safe access.
- 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;
- sealant, eg polyvinyl acetate (PVA);
- scraper, trowel, hand drill;
- heat source (for some mastics);
- bucket of water and rags;
- paintbrush;
- asbestos waste container, eg labelled polythene sack; and
- clear polythene sack.

Personal protective equipment (PPE)
- Provide:
  - disposable overalls fitted with a hood; and
  - boots without laces (laced boots are hard to decontaminate).
- A respirator is not normally required.

Procedure
Caution: Don’t use power tools.
- Protect nearby surfaces from contamination. Cover with 500-gauge polythene sheeting and fix with duct tape to non-asbestos surfaces.
- Can you remove the part rather than scraping off the asbestos-containing material?
- Gently scrape up adhering mastic. You can soften mastic with solvent, by warming with an infra-red lamp, or embrittle it with dry ice.

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’.

Tape mastic
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
- 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
- em7 Using damp rags to clean surfaces of minor asbestos contamination
- em8 Personal decontamination
- em9 Disposal of asbestos waste

OTHER HAZARDS
- Scrape off mastic into the waste container.
- For plaster-based materials, dampen them thoroughly with water and scrape off using ‘shadow vacuuming’ - see sheet em4.
- For asbestos ‘Rawplugs’, dampen and drill out using ‘shadow vacuuming’.
- Paint newly exposed surfaces with sealant.

Cleaning and disposal
- Clean the area and equipment with the Class H vacuum cleaner and damp rags.
- Put debris, used rags, polythene sheeting, paintbrush 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.

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.

This document is available at www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/essentials/index.htm

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