

# a4

## asbestos essentials

### Non-licensed tasks

This information will help employers and the self-employed to comply with the Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012.

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 insulation board (AIB) panel, less than 1 m<sup>2</sup>, fixed with nails or screws

### What this sheet covers

This sheet describes good practice when you need to remove a single AIB sheet less than 1 square metre in area.

This sheet is NOT appropriate:

- when the AIB has more than minor damage or is heavily painted so its removal could damage adjacent panels;
- when the AIB is in the form of ceiling tiles or slats.
- for removing heavily nailed or centre-nailed panels;
- for soffits;
- for a panel larger than 1 square metre; or
- for removing more than two small panels a week.

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- and 1000-gauge polythene sheeting and duct tape
- Warning tape and notices
- Class H vacuum cleaner (BS 8520) – see sheet em4
- Thick paste, eg wallpaper paste or shaving foam
- Sealant, eg polyvinyl acetate (PVA)
- Permanent sealant
- Magnet
- Screwdriver
- Garden-type sprayer containing wetting agent
- Paint brush
- Bucket of water and rags
- Asbestos waste container, eg labelled polythene sack
- Asbestos warning stickers
- 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:**

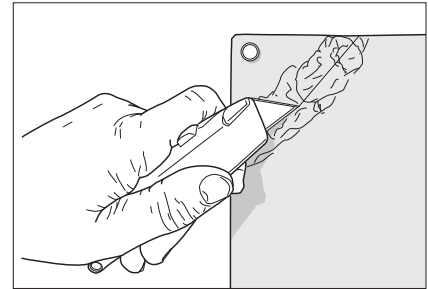
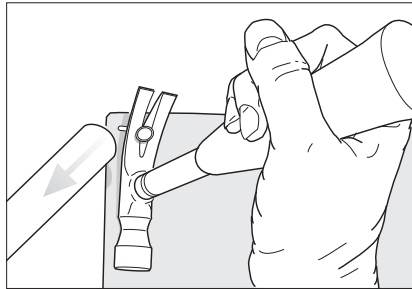
- Don't sweep up dust or debris – use a Class H vacuum cleaner or damp rags.
- Don't take used overalls home.
- Don't reuse disposable PPE.
- Don't smoke.
- Don't eat or drink in the work area.

### OTHER HAZARDS

**Work at height** – see [www.hse.gov.uk/falls/index.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/falls/index.htm). Take precautions to avoid falls. Must you work from a ladder? Where necessary, erect an access platform.

**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.



*If possible, remove nails with a claw and shadow vacuuming. If this is difficult without damaging the board, apply paste to one corner and make a deep score line so you can lever the corner away first*

### Procedure

- Inspect carefully. If the AIB is in good condition and is unlikely to get damaged upon removal, follow this sheet.
- If the board is badly damaged or likely to get damaged, use an HSE-licensed contractor.

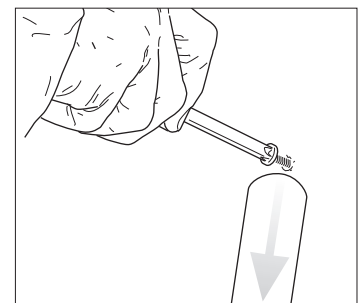
#### Panel with nails

**Caution:** If the panel has nails in the centre, the job needs an HSE-licensed contractor.

- Erect a mini-enclosure – see sheet em3.
- If you can remove nails with the claw, do so with 'shadow vacuuming' - see sheet em4.
- If this is not possible, you need to break the panel across one corner. Cover the intended break line with paste/foam.
- Deeply score the panel across one nailed corner through the paste/foam.
- Lever to break the panel at the scored line – hold the vacuum nozzle near to the break to collect as much dust as possible.
- Ease the panel away to loosen other nails, and remove these with shadow vacuuming.
- Remove the panel and vacuum all newly-exposed surfaces.

#### Panel with screws

- Protect nearby surfaces from contamination. Cover with 500-gauge polythene sheeting and fix with duct tape to non-asbestos surfaces.
- Locate steel screws with the magnet. Locate brass screws by careful paint scraping.
- Use 'shadow vacuuming' to control dust – see sheet em4.
- Unscrew – put the screws in the waste container.
- Ease the panel away. Vacuum its newly-exposed surfaces and screw holes.



*Use shadow vacuuming to control dust as you remove screws*

#### All panels

- Spray the panel with PVA.
- Double-wrap large panels with 1000-gauge polythene sheeting; place smaller boards in the waste container.
- Attach asbestos warning stickers.
- Gently paint newly-exposed surfaces and screw holes with sealant paint.

### 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)
- 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.

## Cleaning and disposal

- Clean any newly-exposed surfaces with the Class H vacuum cleaner.
- Clean a mini-enclosure with the Class H vacuum cleaner and dismantle it as advised in sheet em3.
- 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, dutyholder 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*
- em3 *Building and dismantling a mini-enclosure*
- 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.