

em1

asbestos
essentials

What to do if you discover or accidentally disturb asbestos during your work

Equipment and method sheet

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.

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

Remember:

- Asbestos fibres can cause fatal lung disease and lung cancer.
- Read the safety checklist and sheet a0.
- You must be trained to work safely with asbestos materials.
- Asbestos isn't always obvious. Would you spot an asbestos gasket on an old engine, asbestos cement pipes or an asbestos-containing fuse board? If you're not sure, the premises owner needs to get it checked out!
- There are three 'colours' of asbestos, but you can't tell just by the colour what you have found; it could be mixed with other materials which change its appearance.

What this sheet covers

This sheet tells you what you need to do if you discover or accidentally disturb and release asbestos during your work.

Unexpected discovery of asbestos

If during your work you discover materials which you believe to be asbestos stop work immediately. Put up a warning sign and ensure nobody enters the area. Report the problem to whoever is in charge and arrange to have a sample of the material analysed. If it does not contain asbestos then work can continue. If the material does contain asbestos then follow the flow chart to decide if the work needs a licensed contractor.

Alternatively, you could presume that the material contains the worst type of asbestos and apply the appropriate controls, using a licensed contractor if required.

If you are employed in-house, remember to tell your manager to update the asbestos management plan; otherwise report it to the customer.

Accidental release of asbestos

If you accidentally disturb and release asbestos during your work, it must be dealt with quickly and appropriately.

The clean-up of lower risk asbestos materials where the fibres are firmly bound in a matrix but are essentially in good condition (ie mostly intact), such as asbestos cement (AC), bitumen products, papers, textiles, small-scale release of asbestos insulating board (AIB) etc will generally not require a licensed contractor.

Caution

Check what you're working on before you start:

- Avoid using a sweeping brush as this can spread asbestos.
- Make sure no unauthorised personnel enter the area.
- The clean-up of any accidental release of higher risk materials, eg asbestos lagging, loose fill, asbestos coatings (not textured coatings) or large-scale releases of AIB, must be done by a licensed contractor.

Emergency procedures

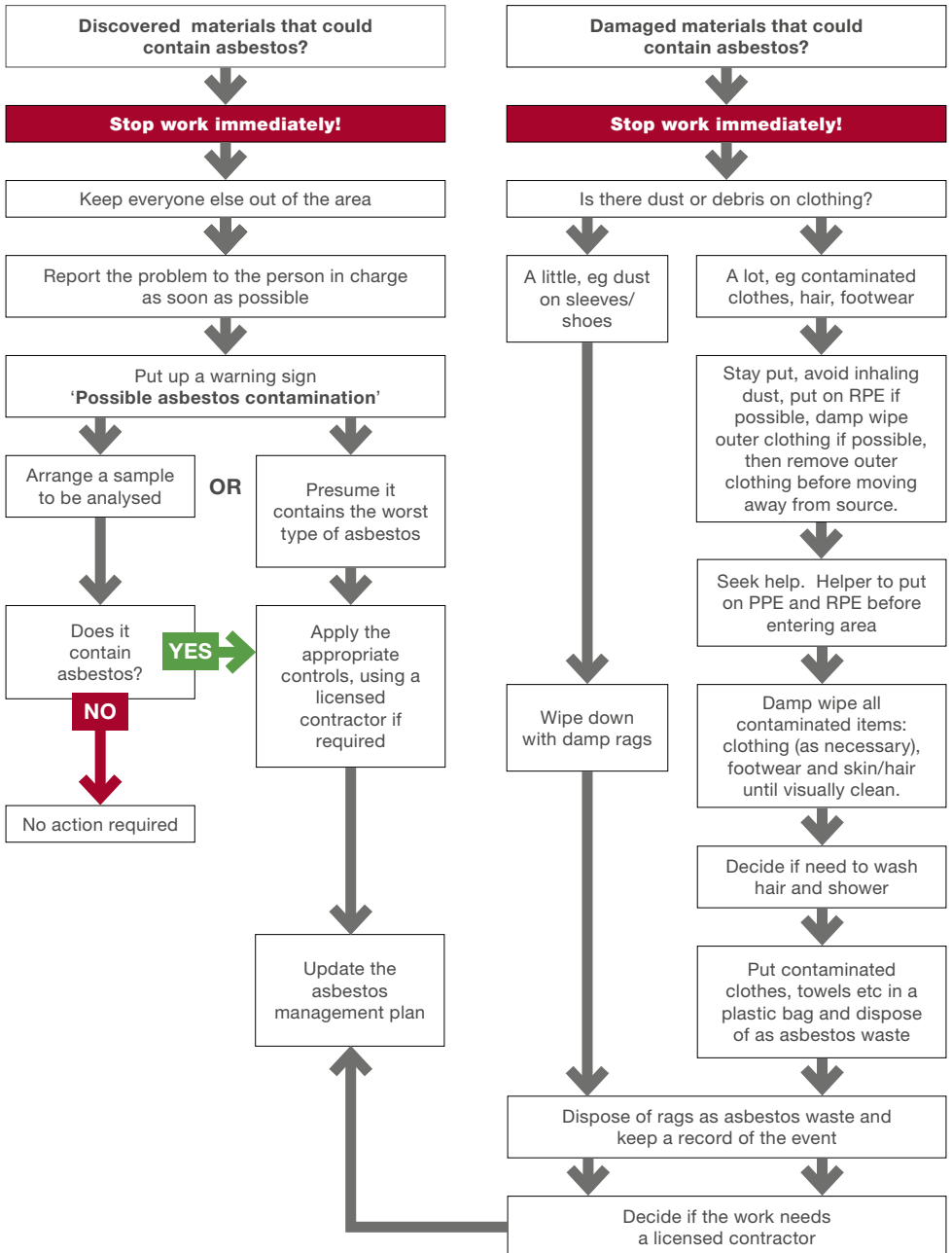
Your emergency procedures should include managing an uncontrolled release of asbestos materials into the workplace. Steps should be taken to:

- warn anybody who may be affected;
- exclude from the area anyone not needed to deal with the release;
- identify the cause of the uncontrolled release;
- regain adequate control as soon as possible;
- make sure anyone in the work area affected who is not wearing personal protective equipment (PPE), including respiratory protective equipment (RPE), leaves the affected area immediately. Minimise the spread of asbestos by ensuring they are suitably decontaminated;
- clean up dust and debris (see em7);
- decontaminate anyone who is contaminated with dust and debris;
- ensure rags, clothing or PPE is decontaminated or disposed of as contaminated waste;
- consider lone and/or remote workers to ensure they can alert someone if necessary.



Top row: An asbestos gasket, asbestos cement pipes and an asbestos-containing fuse board
 Bottom row: The asbestos cement pipes are labelled, so are the tiles, but you might not know until you start to lift them. There could be sprayed limpet under the AC sheeting

Flow chart





AIB fire surround



Don't assume there will always be warning signs. There could be undiscovered asbestos in buildings you work on

More information

For information about health and safety visit <https://books.hse.gov.uk> or <http://www.hse.gov.uk>. You can view HSE guidance online and order priced publications from the website. HSE priced publications are also available from bookshops. To report inconsistencies or inaccuracies in this guidance email: commissioning@wilt.com. British Standards can be obtained in PDF or hard copy formats from BSI: <http://shop.bsigroup.com> or by contacting BSI Customer Services for hard copies only Tel: 0846 086 9001 email: cservices@bsigroup.com. The Stationery Office publications are available from The Stationery Office, PO Box 29, Norwich NR3 1GN Tel: 0333 202 5070 Fax: 0333 202 5080. E-mail: customer.services@tso.co.uk Website: www.tso.co.uk. They are also available from bookshops. Statutory Instruments can be viewed free of charge at www.legislation.gov.uk where you can also search for changes to legislation.

This guidance is issued by the Health and Safety Executive. Following the guidance is not compulsory, unless specifically stated, 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.

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