

# a23

## 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 asbestos-containing floor tiles and mastic

### What this sheet covers

This sheet describes good practice when you need to remove floor tiles that contain asbestos. These may also have asbestos-paper backing, or be fixed with asbestos-containing mastic.

#### Preparing the work area

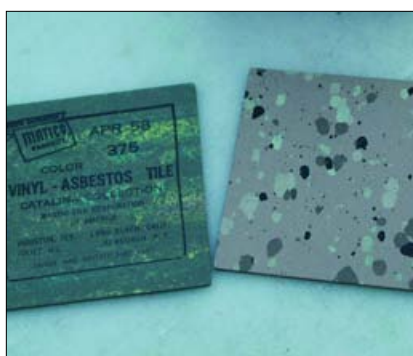
- Restrict access - minimise the number of people present.
- Close doors. Use tape and notices to warn others.
- Ensure adequate lighting.

#### Equipment

- warning tape and notices;
- Class H vacuum cleaner (BS EN 60335 - see sheet em4) for large areas;
- sharp knife;
- hammer;
- scraper;
- shovel;
- garden-type sprayer containing wetting agent;
- bucket of water and rags;
- asbestos waste container, eg labelled polythene sack; 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.



Floor tiles that contain asbestos can also have asbestos-paper backing, or be fixed with asbestos-containing mastic

### SAFETY CHECKLIST

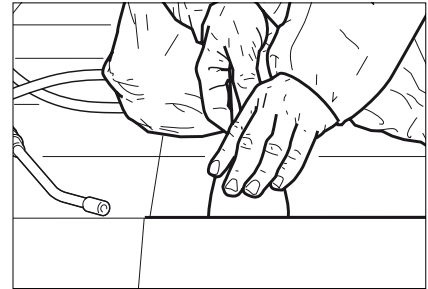
- ✓ Can you avoid disturbing asbestos by doing the job in some other way?
- ✓ Do you need a licence for the work?
- ✓ Always follow all legal requirements.
- ✓ Follow the task guidance sheet.
- ✓ Use an asbestos waste container.
- ✓ Dispose at a licensed disposal site.

**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 re-use disposable PPE.
- Don't smoke.
- Don't eat or drink in the work area.

### OTHER HAZARDS

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



*Spray water under the tiles to suppress dust as you lift them gently, avoiding breakage*

### Procedure

#### Overlaying AC sheets

- Can you avoid removal, eg by overlaying with non-asbestos material?
- Warn the building owner about the presence of asbestos material, so it can be managed properly.

#### Removal

- Place the scraper in the joint between the tiles. Lift the tile gently - try to avoid breakage.
- For firmly-fixed tiles, tap the scraper with the hammer.
- For a large tiled area, lift tiles using a shovel. This speeds up the job and avoids kneeling close to the tiles.
- Spray water under the tiles as they are lifted, to suppress dust and wet any asbestos paper that may be present.
- Wet any asbestos paper tile backing as the tiles are lifted.
- Gently scrape up adhering mastic. You can soften mastic with solvent, by warming with an infra-red lamp, or embrittle it with dry ice.
- Place debris in the waste container.

**Caution: Never sand the floor.**

### Cleaning and disposal

- Where you have removed only a few tiles, use damp rags to clean the floor. Clean larger areas with the Class H vacuum cleaner.
- Clean the equipment with damp rags.
- Put debris, used rags 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

- **Licensed asbestos contractors, and training providers** - HSE's Infoline  
Tel: 0845 345 0055  
Textphone: 0845 408 9577  
e-mail: [hse.infoline@natbrit.com](mailto:hse.infoline@natbrit.com)  
and at [www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/licensing/index.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/licensing/index.htm)
- **HSE priced and free publications** -  
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and at [www.hsebooks.co.uk](http://www.hsebooks.co.uk)
- **Qualified hygienists** - The  
British Occupational Hygiene  
Society (BOHS) Tel: 01332 298101  
and at [www.bohs.org/](http://www.bohs.org/) under  
'Professional > Consultants'
- **Trade associations** - the Asbestos  
Removal Contractors Association  
(ARCA) Tel: 01283 531126 Website:  
[www.arcaweb.org.uk](http://www.arcaweb.org.uk), or the Asbestos  
Control and Abatement Division (ACAD)  
Tel: 01325 466704
- **Disposal of asbestos waste** -  
[www.environment-agency.co.uk](http://www.environment-agency.co.uk),  
[www.sepa.org.uk/](http://www.sepa.org.uk/), or  
[www.netregs.gov.uk/netregs](http://www.netregs.gov.uk/netregs).
- **More asbestos pictures and help  
to decide if work is licensed** -  
[www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/index.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/index.htm)

### 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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