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asbestos essentials

Non-licensed tasks

Some trades likely to disturb asbestos

Anyone who works on the fabric of a building, may be at risk of disturbing asbestos. This includes:



■ electricians, joiners, plumbers, gas fitters, shop fitters, heating and ventilation engineers;



■ labourers, roofers, plasterers, demolition workers and other workers in construction;



■ phone and data engineers, alarm installers; and

■ surveyors, general maintenance engineers, painters and decorators.

Advice on non-licensed work with asbestos

Introduction to 'Asbestos essentials' task sheets

This sheet tells employers, managers and sole-traders what to do when they need to work on or near asbestos-containing materials (ACMs). It will help you to decide what category of asbestos work it is and how to plan the work safely.

Why is asbestos a problem?

Large amounts of asbestos were used in new and refurbished buildings before 2000. Usage began to decline in the 1970s and blue asbestos (crocidolite) had a voluntary ban in 1970. Blue and brown (amosite) asbestos were banned by law in 1985. Uses of white asbestos (chrysotile) were banned in 1999. Everything else and most second-hand supply (except for very high performance materials) was banned by 2000. Therefore, all supply of materials containing asbestos is banned, including making materials available to a third party in any way, whether or not for any payment.

A large number of premises and older plant and equipment still contain some form of asbestos. Much of the asbestos will be hidden in the fabric of the building so not immediately obvious – it is also unlikely to be recorded in the building plans. Workers most likely to come into contact with asbestos-containing products are those in the construction, maintenance, refurbishment and related trades.

When asbestos materials are damaged or disturbed they can release dangerous fibres which, if breathed in, can cause serious diseases. Around 4500 people in Great Britain die every year from asbestos-related diseases, making asbestos the single greatest cause of work-related deaths.

What you need to do

- Before starting work you need to check what asbestos is present, in commercial properties there should be a plan/register – ask to see it. You need to check that the plan covers the area of the building that you will be working in and if you are doing refurbishment work that it includes a survey that tells you what types of asbestos is present and it's condition. If there is no register or survey or the report is not clear – do not start work. Alternatively, you can assume that any material you need to disturb does contain asbestos. The client also needs to see your plan of work to understand what work you are going to do, and how.

Disease

Disturbing asbestos-containing material can result in release of invisible fibres. Once in the air, fibres can be breathed in and cause lung diseases including:

- **mesothelioma – a cancer of the linings to the lungs and stomach;**
- **lung cancer; and**
- **asbestosis – lung scarring.**

There are no sudden changes in health after breathing in fibres - these diseases can take from 15 to 60 years to develop. They are incurable and often fatal. You need to protect yourself now to prevent contracting an asbestos related disease in the future.

Working on asbestos-containing materials

Asbestos fibres are more likely to be released if the following happens:

- **Asbestos-containing materials are not identified before work starts.**
- **Work is poorly planned or badly carried out.**
- **You work on dry asbestos-containing materials.**
- **You use power tools or saws.**
- **You sweep up asbestos-containing debris.**

Asbestos-containing materials may be left in place, as long as they do not and will not put anyone at risk of exposure to asbestos fibres.

Your workers

- Everyone who works with, or may disturb asbestos, must be properly trained (including the self-employed). See sheet em2.

What the premises owner (client) needs to tell you

- Where any asbestos containing materials (or materials presumed to contain asbestos) are, that you are likely to meet. The information provided should be specific.

Main points:

- You need training to work safely with ACMs. See sheet em2.
- *Asbestos Essentials* does not apply to licensed work. You should only go ahead if you are sure the work does not require a licence.
- Work with, or disturbance of, any type of ACM can be dangerous.
- Second-hand equipment may not be asbestos-free.
- If you work on ACMs and you smoke, you are at much greater risk of lung cancer.
- Consider those around you. Don't put your workmates in danger or take fibres home on your clothes and put your family at risk.
- Carry out the work and dispose of contaminated materials safely.

Does the work need a licence?

Most work with asbestos needs to be carried out by a licensed contractor. This includes work on asbestos coating and asbestos lagging; and work on asbestos insulation or asbestos insulating board (AIB) where the risk assessment demonstrates that the fibre release will be high, eg the material is badly damaged, or the work is not short duration work.

'Short duration' means any one person doing this type of work for less than one hour, or more people doing the work for a total of less than two hours, in any seven consecutive days. The total time spent by all workers must not exceed two hours. This includes time spent setting up, cleaning and clearing up.

Non-licensed work includes work on asbestos-containing textured coatings and asbestos cement.

Is it notifiable non-licensed work?

From April 2012, some non-licensed work, where the risk of fibre release is greater, is subject to three additional requirements – notification of work, medical examinations and record keeping (the requirement for medical examinations does not come into force until April 2015). This work is known as notifiable non-licensed work (NNLW).

To decide if the work is NNLW, you will need to consider the type of work you are going to carry out, the type of material you are going to work on and its condition:

- **Decide what type of work you are doing:**
 - **Maintenance** – eg drilling holes to attach fittings or pass cables through, painting, cleaning etc. Maintenance includes some removal where it is incidental to the main task, eg removing an asbestos ceiling tile to allow inspection; or

- **Removal** – eg as part of a refurbishment or redesign project; or
- **Encapsulation** – eg work to enclose or seal asbestos materials in good condition; or
- **Air monitoring and control, and the collection and analysis of samples.**

■ **Consider the asbestos type:**

- Is it **friable?** – the more friable a material is, the more likely it will release asbestos fibres when worked on and the greater the risk of exposure. Materials such as asbestos insulation are more friable than materials such as asbestos cement; and
- **How firmly is the asbestos bonded in a matrix?** (For removal work only) – Asbestos containing materials (ACMs) where the asbestos is coated, covered or contained within another material, such as cement, paint or plastic are considered to be firmly bonded in a matrix; and

■ **Consider the material's condition:**

- **Has the material been damaged or is it in poor condition?** – eg badly flood or fire-damaged; and
- **Will the materials' matrix be destroyed when worked on?** – eg deteriorating textured decorative coatings ('Artex') with gel or steam.

Once you've considered these three elements, the decision flow chart below will help you to decide which category your work with asbestos is, or check the HSE website for more help before you start.

In summary, most work with firmly bonded materials in good condition such as asbestos cement, bitumen, plastic, resin, rubber, roofing felt, paper linings, cardboard, textiles, gaskets, washers and rope etc will not need to be notified. Short duration 'maintenance' work involving AIB which is in good condition will also not normally need to be notified, NNLW will normally include short duration maintenance and removal work with asbestos insulation, removal of textured decorative coatings where the material is destroyed eg by scraping it off, and short duration removal of AIB as part of refurbishment.

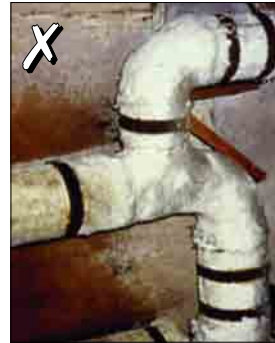
SAFETY CHECKLIST

- ✓ 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.

Licensed work – Don't touch this!



Broken asbestos insulating board, asbestos lagging and sprayed asbestos (limpet)

Non-licensed work – Do this if you are trained

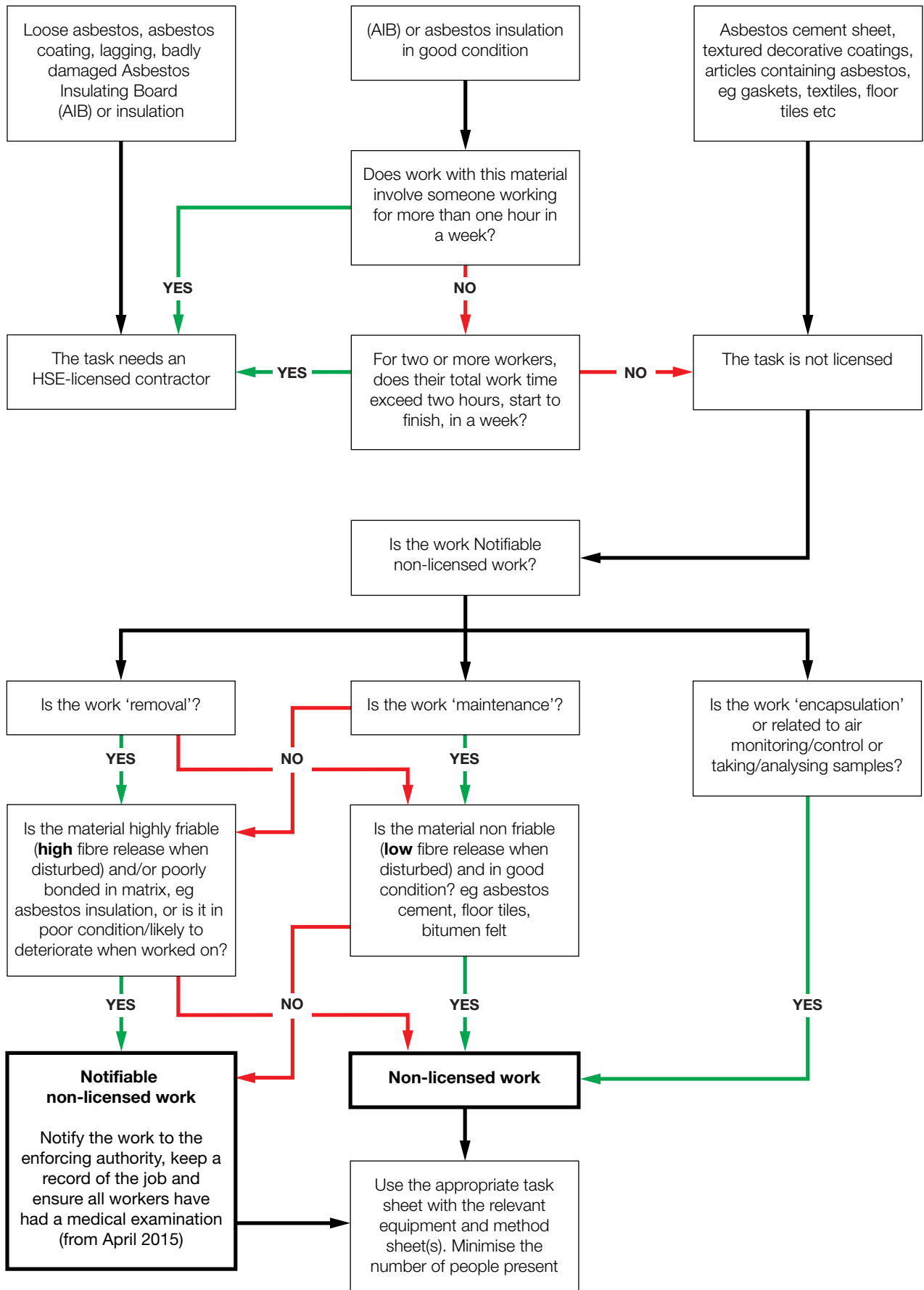


Damaged textured coating, asbestos cement roofing and an asbestos-containing gasket

If you have any doubts, carry out a risk assessment (see 'More help') or ask the client to employ an HSE-licensed asbestos contractor.

Decision flow chart

Use this simple flow chart to help you decide who needs to do the work:



OTHER HAZARDS

Other specific hazards appear in the checklist on each Asbestos essentials task sheet. They include:

Work on fragile roofs – see www.hse.gov.uk/construction/index.htm. Fragile roofs cannot bear weight.

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

Electrical hazards – see www.hse.gov.uk/electricity/index.htm. Get a competent electrician to isolate and reconnect electricity supply.

Gas safety – check your contractor's registration on the Gas Safe register at www.gassaferegister.co.uk/

Manual handling – see www.hse.gov.uk/msd/index.htm. Plan how to remove and handle heavy material and articles safely.

Slips and trips – see www.hse.gov.uk/slips/index.htm. Floors protected with polythene become very slippery when wet.

Confined spaces – see www.hse.gov.uk/confinedspace/index.htm. You need to know that restricted workplaces are safe to enter and the air is fit to breathe.

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

Planning

Before carrying out any work:

- Ask the premises owners for their records of asbestos; what was checked, what was found, and what was not checked.
- If there is no record and you have reason to suspect asbestos, ask for an asbestos survey to be done before accepting the contract (you will have to check yourself in domestic properties).
- Check if the work could require a licence. See 'More help'.
- When a licence is not needed for the work, check if the work is NNLW and if so, follow the requirements and then follow the task sheets or other HSE guidance.
- If there is no task sheet for the work, get help from a competent health and safety advisor.
- When you seek advice, ensure that the person providing that advice is competent.
- If asbestos-containing material needs replacement, the replacement must be asbestos-free.

Prepare a short plan of work. If the work is NNLW, your copy of the notification may help you. Make sure the plan includes the following:

- what the work is and how long it is likely to last;
- the address and description of the job;
- when the work will be done;
- the procedures to follow to reduce exposure and prevent the spread of asbestos, ie by following the *Asbestos essentials* task sheets;
- the equipment needed, including personal protective equipment (PPE);
- decontamination and waste disposal arrangements; and
- emergency procedures.

See equipment and method (em) sheets for useful advice to help you prepare this plan.

Make sure that everyone involved is fully aware of the plan and knows:

- what they need to do;
- how to wear their PPE and RPE correctly;
- why each action is being taken; and
- what to do in the case of emergencies and accidents.

Manage the work

- Monitor the work to ensure it is being carried out with the appropriate controls.

Caution: Emergency call-out is no excuse for low standards or cutting corners.

Disposal of asbestos materials and waste

'Hazardous' or 'Special' Waste needs safe disposal. This includes:

- asbestos;
- materials containing asbestos; and
- anything contaminated with asbestos unless fully decontaminated.

Make sure you double-bag and label asbestos waste.

For advice on disposal contact the Local Authority, the Environment Agency

MORE HELP

■ For more information about asbestos, licensed asbestos removal contractors and training providers see:

- the Asbestos Removal Contractors Association (ARCA) – www.arca.org.uk
- the Asbestos Control and Abatement Division (ACAD) – www.tica-acad.co.uk
- the United Kingdom Asbestos Training Association (UKATA) – www.ukata.org.uk
- the Independent Asbestos Training Providers (IATP) – www.iatp.org.uk
- www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/index.htm
- the British Occupational Hygiene Society (BOHS) – www.bohs.org

■ Building surveyors competent in asbestos matters can advise on sampling to identify if asbestos is present. Samples may only be analysed by laboratories accredited by UKAS - see www.ukas.org/testing/

■ For lists of qualified hygienists or consultants see the BOHS website at www.bohs.org or the Occupational Safety and Health Consultants Register (OSHCR) at www.oshcr.org

■ Contact your trade association.

■ British Standards can be obtained in PDF or hard copy formats from the BSI online shop: www.bsigroup.com/Shop

■ For advice on disposing of asbestos and other waste go to www.environment-agency.gov.uk, www.sepa.org.uk/, www.defra.gov.uk/ or www.netregs.gov.uk/netregs

■ Take a look at some images of common uses of asbestos on www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/index.htm

■ HSE's online risk assessment at www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/index.htm shows you if the task you need to carry out requires a licence.

■ 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.



Double-bagged waste



Asbestos label



Don't create dust if you can avoid it



Using a Class H vacuum cleaner and a drill cowl

or, if based in Scotland, SEPA. Or hire a licensed waste contractor. See 'More help' and em9.

The information in the task sheets will help small businesses - subcontractors and sole traders - to comply with the Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012. It also helps duty-holders, clients, trade union and employee safety representatives know how work should be done.

Most work with asbestos-containing materials, including lagging, insulation and insulating board, must be done by an HSE-licensed contractor.

Asbestos essentials covers work that will not need a licence if carried out just as the sheets describe. Each sheet describes 'good practice' for a particular task and covers the action needed to reduce exposure to an adequate level.

It is important to follow all the actions in the task sheet, or use equally effective measures. Following the sheets is not a guarantee of safety.

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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Published by the Health and Safety Executive 04/12