

factsheet

Regulatory Services

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Dealing with Asbestos Cement

Every year the Council's Environmental Protection team receives a large number of enquiries about garden sheds, garages and house soffits made of asbestos. These structures and products are typically made of material called asbestos cement. This fact sheet gives some information about the health risks of such material and ways of disposing of it safely and properly.

What is Asbestos Cement and how is it identified?

Asbestos cement is usually encountered today in the form of flat or corrugated panels that are used as the roofs and walls of old sheds, garages or in soffits underneath the eaves of a house. It is usually grey or brown in appearance with a coarse feel when touched and older sheets may be covered in places with moss or lichens. The formal identification of asbestos is a specialised process that the Environmental Protection team are unable to offer. If you require any other form of confirmation regarding the asbestos content of a material you should seek a specialised firm on the web offering this service.

What are the health risks?

As they age or become damaged, asbestos products release tiny fibres into the air which can be inhaled into the lungs. When very high levels are breathed in over a long time there is a risk of lung diseases, including cancer. However, from a public health viewpoint, there was a low risk with asbestos cement because it contains a relatively small proportion of asbestos (10-15%) that is

firmly bound in place by cement which makes the sheets strong enough to withstand any relatively rough treatment that might release the asbestos fibres. In addition, under normal weathering the rate of fibre release is very low and as this occurs outdoors rather than in an enclosed space it reduces the risk. Although sheets may show some cracks, small holes and discolouring this will not affect the overall integrity of the panels in a way that would make it a health hazard. Occasionally asbestos cement may be found indoors as a panel for fire protection or some other use. Again it is not necessary to remove it if it is undamaged; a regular visual check on the condition is worthwhile and as a further precaution you may consider sealing it with paint or sealant, although you must make sure that these are not combustible and meet the British Standard for spread of flame.

Do I have to get rid of any asbestos cement on my property?

There is no legal requirement in the UK to routinely dispose of such material, but if you intend keeping the asbestos sheets in place you should avoid trying to improve the appearance by doing anything that generates dust, for example dry sanding it. You could consider painting the panels, although, as mentioned above, there is no safety requirement to do this as they give off very little dust by general weathering.

How can I dispose of asbestos cement?

Householders can dispose of asbestos cement sheets themselves at certain Leicestershire County Council civic amenity sites by prior arrangement. If you are disposing of the material yourself you must 'phone the County Council Waste Management on 0116 3050001 to confirm which household waste site you can take the

material to. You will also need to 'phone this number to request a short term permit to tip if you are transporting the material in a van or trailer. Alternatively professional asbestos demolition and removal contractors can be found in Yellow Pages or on the web. You must ensure that they are licensed hazardous waste carriers with the Environment Agency, check online at <http://www2.environment-agency.gov.uk/epr/> or ring 08708 506506 if you are unsure. Do not give any waste to an unlicensed waste carrier or someone who says they will get rid of it for you. **If any fly-tipped waste is traced back to the household it came from, the householder could be prosecuted and fined.**

What precautions should I follow to remove asbestos cement sheets?

Householders can safely remove small amounts of asbestos cement sheets or dismantle garages or sheds by following a small number of simple precautions.

Clothing

Consider using disposable overalls with a hood, single - use disposable gloves and respiratory protective equipment such as a disposable respirator to standards EN149 (type FFP3) or EN1827 (type FMP3). If you use ordinary work clothes make sure that you handle these carefully afterwards and wash them immediately to avoid contaminating other clothing and taking excessive dust indoors.

Equipment

- Large, strong polythene sacks and tape to seal them
- Suitable tools to undo the bolts or other fasteners securing the sheets together
- Water sprayer (clean out and use an old domestic disinfectant spray or similar)
- Bucket of water and cloth rags
- A secure container or strong plastic bag designated for any waste
- Labels/paper and cello tape

Removal

- Be careful of putting too much weight across the roof panels as they may break
- The general advice is that the sheets must not be cut or broken, particularly with power tools as this will generate significant amounts of dust
- Dampen the area around the bolts and fasteners with the water sprayer while you unscrew the construction bolts/fasteners holding the structure together
- Seal the bolts and fasteners in the designated waste container/strong plastic bag
- Don't drop the sheets or use a rubble chute; lower them carefully to the ground and stack them
- The panels should then be sealed in the large polythene sacks with the tape. These can be double bagged as an extra precaution. Label these as containing asbestos cement.

Cleaning

- Inspect the work area and pick up any small pieces of debris; avoid stepping on this and crushing it. Seal the small pieces in the designated waste container/strong plastic bag
- Use the bucket of water and cloth rags to clean the equipment and any surfaces nearby that may have dust on them
- Put the used rags, small pieces of asbestos cement and protective clothing in the designated waste container/strong plastic bag and seal and label it as containing asbestos cement waste

The above guidance contains public sector information published by the Health and Safety Executive and licensed under the Open Government Licence v1.0. Before starting any work you are strongly advised to view and/or download the full advice sheets (particularly a14, em6 and em8) at www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/essentials/index.htm

Environmental Protection

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這資料具不同的格式，請致電 (01509) 634560 索取。

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