

# em5

## 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.

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

#### Remember:

- Asbestos fibres can cause lung cancer and lung diseases.
- You must be trained to work safely with asbestos materials.
- Concentrated wetting agents may cause dermatitis. Read the safety data sheet or label. Avoid toxic or flammable wetting agents.

## Wetting asbestos materials

### Equipment and method sheet

### What this sheet covers

This sheet explains why you must wet asbestos materials before working on them, and how to do this.

The spraying technique can also be used when painting or sealing asbestos materials.

Damp asbestos materials release far fewer asbestos fibres into the air. Don't drench them and create a waste 'slurry'.

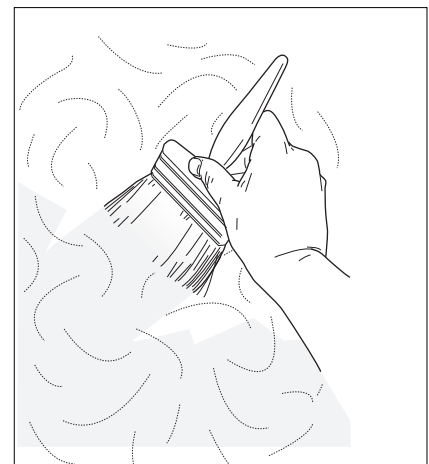
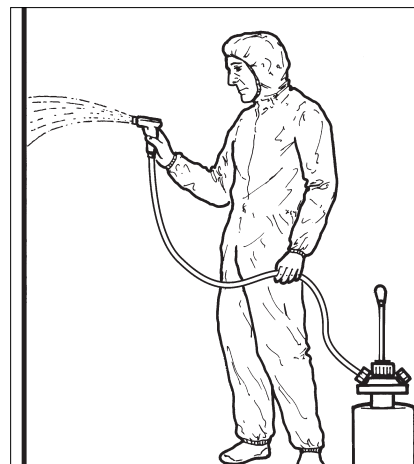
Electrical equipment in the area needs to be isolated and protected.

### Equipment

- Wetting agent – for suppliers see 'More help' over the page, or you could use liquid detergent as an alternative
- Sprayer, either a garden type spray or a low pressure spraying machine less than 3.4 bar (50 psi)
- Brush or roller

### Procedures

- Wet the asbestos materials before starting any work. Don't work on dry asbestos materials.
- Wetting agents make it easier. Note, blue and brown asbestos don't absorb water easily.
- Some asbestos materials, eg board, sheet cannot be wetted all the way through. So you need other methods to control dust exposure, eg Class H vacuum cleaner.



**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)
- **Wetting agent suppliers** – contact ARCA or ACAD – see sheet a0.
- 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 equipment and method (em) sheets and task (a) 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.

- Vacuuming up very wet material will damage the cleaner's HEPA filter.

**Caution: Some tasks will be carried out at height. Make sure that wetting does not create a slipping risk.**

**Wetting**

- Spraying is the preferred wetting method.
- If you use a brush or roller, dispose of it as asbestos waste.
- Dilute the wetting agent with water according to the manufacturer's instructions. This is usually:
  - 10–15 parts water to 1 part wetting agent; or
  - 8 parts water to 1 part liquid detergent.
- Allow the spray to 'fall' onto the asbestos material - not hit it as a jet.
- Spray carefully; use a slow backwards and forwards motion. Avoid concentrating on any one area – this can disturb the asbestos material or leave dry patches.



*Spray at low pressure; high pressure spray could disturb fibres from asbestos paper under these tiles*



*Over-wetting the material creates a waste slurry which will be difficult to clean up*

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](http://www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/essentials/index.htm)

© Crown copyright If you wish to reuse this information visit [www.hse.gov.uk/copyright](http://www.hse.gov.uk/copyright) for details. First published as part of *Asbestos Essentials Task Manual 2001*.

Published by the Health and Safety Executive 04/12