

Asbestos Guidance Leaflet

Introduction

As an allotment holder you may come across asbestos cement products on your plot. This information sheet will help you to deal with them safely and responsibly.

Safety note: asbestos is harmful. Only asbestos cement can be handled by the public, and even then safety precautions must be taken. If you find or suspect that any other form of asbestos may be present do not try to deal with it yourself. Report it to the Council on 01429 523333 or seek specialist advice.

Identifying asbestos

Asbestos was commonly used in buildings and as fire-proofing from the 1950s to the mid 1980s. It has been used in many products including ceiling tiles, pipe insulation, spray coatings and boilers. The kind of asbestos that you are most likely to encounter on an allotment is asbestos cement.



Asbestos cement is a mixture of asbestos (usually about 10-15% of the total product) and cement. It is often seen as corrugated roofing panels on sheds, farms and industrial buildings, but can also be used to make drain pipes, flues and water tanks. It is usually grey/white in colour, hard and inflexible.

There are 3 different kinds of asbestos known as “white”, “blue” and “brown” but please note that the colour of the product will not tell you what kind of asbestos has been used and they are all dangerous.

Why is asbestos a health risk?

It is when asbestos fibres are breathed into the lungs that it presents a risk of developing serious or even fatal diseases such as lung cancer, mesothelioma and asbestosis. This is why asbestos waste has to be dealt with so carefully.

Asbestos cement is often regarded as being lower risk than other forms of asbestos as the fibres are bonded into the cement and are not easily released. However you will be at risk if you wire brush, sand, drill, saw, cut or otherwise damage asbestos cement products.

What should I do if I find asbestos on my allotment?

If there is asbestos cement sheeting on your allotment and the sheets are in good condition, not likely to become damaged and you are happy for them to remain (e.g. as the roof of a shed you wish to use) then it is safe to leave them as they are. Asbestos cement is very durable and the sheets only present a risk of releasing fibres if they are damaged.

However, if the sheets are in poor condition, you wish to remove them or you have discovered fly tipped asbestos waste on your plot then please follow the guidance below.

How should asbestos cement be removed? Can I do this work myself?

Yes you can remove it yourself (a licence is not needed) but you will need to take some precautions. Please remember that only asbestos cement products can be handled by the public. Any other form of asbestos is more dangerous and should only be removed by a licensed specialist.

Asbestos products must never be disposed of by mixing with household or other waste.

To safely remove asbestos cement sheeting follow these steps. To ensure that the task is done as quickly and safely as possible don't skimp on your preparation. The aim of the task must be to minimise the potential release of asbestos fibres.

Equipment list

- Plenty of heavy duty polythene to cover the area and to double wrap the asbestos sheets, and duck tape to seal it.
- Protective clothing: disposable overalls with a hood, wellington boots (or similar boots without laces that can be washed down –

laces trap the asbestos fibres). Check your face mask is approved for use with asbestos and check the manufacturers instructions if you have a beard!

- A ladder or stable work platform if the asbestos is at a height
- A helper, also wearing protective clothing
- Plenty of wet wipes or damp rags to clean up with afterwards. Never be tempted to sweep up or use a vacuum cleaner.
- Hand tools such as bolt cutters and a hacksaw
- Water to dampen the sheets (perhaps use a garden sprayer)

Preparation – before you start

- Check the equipment list – have you got everything you need?
- Ensure safe access – remove anything that doesn't need to be there. Cover the ground or other surfaces with polythene which can be disposed of later. Ensure you have enough polythene bags to wrap the sheets later on and duck tape to seal the bags.
- Make sure you have a safe means of reaching the asbestos sheets if they are at a height (e.g. removing a shed roof) and someone to help you lower the sheets to the ground carefully. Remember asbestos cement sheets are fragile and will not bear weight - never go onto an asbestos roof.
- To avoid cutting or breaking the asbestos use bolt cutters or a small hacksaw to cut the fastenings so you can remove the sheets – never use power tools as these cause fibres to be released.
- It may be better to do the task on a drizzly day to help dampen down the fibres.

Once you have got everything you need together and have prepared the area you can start removing the asbestos.

Removal

- Remember to avoid or minimise breaking the asbestos cement. Soak the sheets in water before removing them (you may need to do this more than once, but try not to use excess water as this will make it more difficult to clean up later).
- If the sheets are bolted in place dampen and cut the bolts while avoiding contact with the asbestos cement. Place the bolts in one of your polythene bags.
- Hand down the sheets to your helper. Never drop or throw them and do not use rubble chutes as this will break the sheets and release fibres. Place the sheets on the polythene where they will not get damaged.
- Check for debris as you go and avoid crushing pieces on the ground.
- Once you have taken down all the sheets and placed them on the polythene check for debris and add it to the polythene.

Cleaning up

- Clean up by hand using wet wipes or damp rags, add these to the polythene.
- Now double wrap the polythene around the sheets, debris and cleaning materials and seal with duck tape. Do not break the sheets up.
- You will also need to dispose of the polythene used to cover the ground, your overalls and mask and any other waste from the job as asbestos waste. (Wipe down your footwear and put the rags in with the waste) Carry out the same double bagging procedure for these - they can all go in together. Don't take your overalls home.
- When you have finished, and everything is safely double bagged, wash your hands and face and any tools used.
- Be careful transporting the asbestos in your car to avoid tearing the polythene and contaminating your car.

Disposal

Up to 2 bags of asbestos can be disposed of free of charge at the Household Waste Recycling Centre, Burn Road, Hartlepool.

Due to the high costs and difficulties associated with disposing of asbestos you are limited to two trips a year to dispose of this.

You can call into the Recycling Centre and collect secure bags, free of charge, for disposal of small amounts of asbestos. Large amounts of asbestos, e.g. garage roofs, need to be disposed of by a specialist company (you can find these listed in the Yellow Pages or online). It may be worth getting a couple of quotes to get the best deal.

For further advice on bringing asbestos to the Burn Road site please contact Hartlepool Connect on 01429 523333.

Further Information

Further information on asbestos can be found on the Health and Safety Executive website at www.hse.gov.uk (search for asbestos).

Information on the legislation around asbestos disposal can be found on the Environment Agency's website at www.environment-agency.gov.uk (search for asbestos).