

FAQ'S ASBESTOS CEMENT ROOFS AND RAINWATER GOODS SHEDS & GARAGES

I think my shed/garage roof is made of asbestos, how can I be sure?

If the roof is a grey corrugated material not stamped with 'NT', then it is most likely to be asbestos cement. Other materials which may have been used are corrugated iron, or reinforced plastic, although these are both much less common and easy to distinguish from asbestos.

OK, I'm sure that my roof/cement product contains asbestos, should I remove it?

Not if it is good/fair condition and there are no plans for removal/disturbance. Asbestos cement usually lasts for fifty or sixty years before it starts to leak and break up.

But, I thought that all asbestos was dangerous?

That's right, but it is the fibres that are dangerous when they are breathed in. In a hard material like this, fibres are not given off if it is left alone. It is only if you disturb it and make fine dust that it becomes dangerous. That means no power tools (saw, sander, drill etc) and no wire brushes.

Mine is in poor condition, do I need to employ a specialist?

Definitely not. Any competent builder can do the work, although some may prefer not to. You can carry out the work yourself if you are used to D.I.Y and follow all safety precautions, but due to the size and weight of the sheets, you may need someone to assist you. It is not necessary to employ a Licensed Contractor

My roof is in good/fair condition but needs to be cleaned. Can I do it myself?

Asbestos cement often has a growth of lichen or moss on the surface which is unsightly and also starts to eat into the surface. This can be removed by soaking with a dilute solution of household bleach (1 part bleach to 5 parts water). BE VERY CAREFUL WHEN HANDLING BLEACH – GLOVES & GOGGLES SHOULD BE WORN. Leave for a few days then wet down again, then **lift** off carefully with a paint scraper and then place in a plastic bag for disposal.

Can I paint it to stop it leaking?

In general, painting asbestos is not recommended. The surface must be clean, dry, and free of dust, and the right primer must be used to ensure that it does not flake off. Normally, if asbestos leaks then it is at the end of its life and should be removed. To paint it with a bitumen product, can be very expensive and may only give another year or two of life.

Will it cost a lot to have it taken away?

You may either take asbestos cement sheets to a domestic refuse and recycling site which is free for domestic residents or pay a company to dispose of it for you the costs of which will vary. But before starting work you should confirm how much you can take to a refuse site as a private resident by either calling at the refuse site first or contact Kent waste management on 0845 345 0210 .

I want to remove it myself. How do I start?

Follow the guidance below. If at any time, you are not sure what to do then stop, and SEEK ADVICE. Ring 01795 424321.

PREPARATION/PLANNING

* Be sure that the material is made of asbestos cement. Other material cannot stand up to the weather, so if it is exposed to the wind and rain then it is asbestos cement. If the shed/garage is lined internally with another type of board, and you are unsure about what it is – SEEK ADVICE.

- * Know how you are going to dispose of it. A private householder may take it to any of the three household refuse transfer stations in Swale at Sheerness, Sittingbourne or Faversham.
- * Have plastic sheeting available to wrap it as soon as you take it down (available from most large D.I.Y stores and sold as 1000 gauge polythene or damp-proof membrane, sold by the metre and 4 metres wide). **Wrap each sheet individually.** This will avoid handling it a second time. You may also need one or two strong plastic bags (such as rubble bags) for small pieces and silt / debris. You should also have plenty of strong adhesive tape
- * Have a small garden or plant spray available with plenty of p.v.a. adhesive (e.g. Unibond) diluted with about ten times its volume with water.
- * Have old clothes (which you can throw away) or a disposable paper overall available. You could also wear a fibre mask over your nose and mouth (you can get these from any good d.i.y. store)
- * Have the right tools – a large screwdriver, adjustable spanner, a broad paint or wallpaper scraper, hacksaw and a claw hammer. You may not need any of these, it depends on how the panels are fixed, but you are unlikely to need anything else.
- * You may wish to wear a disposable respiratory protective mask available at most D.I.Y stores.

STARTING THE WORK...SAFETY FIRST

- * Keep everyone else away from the work. You don't want children around when you are deconstructing a garage or shed.
- * Do not go onto the shed/garage roof unless you use crawling boards or roof ladders. Asbestos cement is brittle and you may fall through. It also becomes very slippery when wet - another reason to use a roof ladder.
- * NEVER eat, drink, or smoke when you are handling asbestos products.

DOING IT YOURSELF

- * Use a hose to get the asbestos-cement really wet - both inside and outside. Even better, is to do the work just after a period of heavy rain – or even while it is raining! Don't brush or scrape off moss, lichen or algae growing on the roof sheets; this may release asbestos fibres unnecessarily.
- * You must be careful with any silt in the bottom of gutters. Remember, this has come from the asbestos-cement roof and will probably contain a high percentage of free asbestos fibres. Using the dilute adhesive spray, soak it well, and then scrape it into a strong plastic bag. Seal it and dispose of it with the waste asbestos-cement.
- * You can then unbolt or unscrew the asbestos-cement sheets. If the fixing internally uses bent bolts on metal angle joists, then an angle-grinder is the easiest way to cut the bolts, but a hacksaw will do the job just as well. It may be possible to unscrew bolts or screws with a screwdriver or spanner but they will often be rusted into place. If you cannot unscrew or nails have been used, then push the asbestos panel up through the head of the screw. This results in a small amount of damage around the head, but just damp this down with the spray, and pick off the remnants, placing them in the bag.
- * Remove the sheets whole and wrap them straight away. Remember that asbestos cement is heavy, and you are going to have to lift it later. Wrap only one or two sheets at a time unless they are very small. Avoid breaking the material unless it is absolutely necessary. If breakage occurs, any small pieces must be damped down, picked up and placed in a heavy-duty polythene bag for later collection/disposal.
- * Keep the area clear of pieces of broken asbestos-cement. Under no circumstances must pieces be crushed underfoot. Wash down the area when you have finished.
- * Wash yourself thoroughly on completion of the job or before eating or drinking.

Removal of asbestos-cement will give a low risk to health from the release of asbestos fibres provided the above instructions are followed. If any advice or assistance is needed, please contact Swale Borough Council and speak to an officer in either Environmental Response or Housing Enforcement on 01795 424321.

DISPOSAL

You have two options for disposal: taking it yourself to one of Swale's Household Waste (HWRC) sites, or by arranging for an authorized asbestos skip through a private contractor. The waste needs to be transported in accordance with the legislation, further details can be found on the Environment Agency's website:-

<http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/business/topics/waste/40047.aspx>

If you are taking it to an HWRC yourself, the service is **free to domestic residents**. If you are hiring someone to transport or dispose of it on your behalf, then it will be regarded as commercial waste and it cannot be accepted at Household Waste (HWRC) sites.

Upon arrival at the Household Waste (HWRC) site, you will need to speak to a member of staff who is in charge. You must inform him / her of the fact that you wish to dispose of cement bonded asbestos. You will then be directed to a special sealed container where asbestos is stored at this facility. A member of staff will unlock the container for your use and also take some basic (**required**) information, such as to the address from which the asbestos originates. The asbestos should be placed as far inside the container as possible and stacked in a safe and space saving manner. When you have completed your deposit please inform a member of staff who will re-secure the container after you.

If you have any further enquiries regarding asbestos disposal at the any of the sites please phone Kent Waste Management team on 0845 345 0210, who will be happy to advise you or view further details on their web page.

(http://www.kent.gov.uk/environment_and_planning/recycling_and_rubbish/recycling/recycling_centres.aspx).

**** The Scientific Bit ****

Asbestos cement contains about 10-15% Chrysotile (white asbestos). There are at least six different types of asbestos commonly found, and white asbestos is sometimes regarded as less dangerous than the others. This is mainly because the fibres are long, curly and soft. Brown and blue asbestos fibres, on the other hand, are straight, hard and needle-like. Everyone now agrees that all asbestos is dangerous, what is important is that in asbestos cement; the two constituents are bound together so strongly that fibres are not normally released.