

Working on electrical switchboards containing asbestos

This information sheet sets out safe work techniques for working on switchboards that contain asbestos.



If the work involves removing any friable asbestos-containing parts you will need to get a Class A licensed asbestos removalist to do the work.

If you are removing a switchboard where there is only non-friable asbestos present, refer to: [Non-friable asbestos removal safe work practices AR 11: Removing fuse box with asbestos-containing Bakelite backing board](#)

Read this information sheet alongside [Working with or near asbestos – good practice guidelines](#) which sets out seven steps for doing asbestos-related work.

Before you start

Tools and equipment you will need

Make sure you have all the standard equipment you need for doing asbestos-related work. See [Sections 5.3 and 7.0 of Working with or near asbestos – good practice guidelines](#) for details.

You will also need the following equipment:

- hand drill or low-speed power drill with dust control shroud
- H-class (high hazard) vacuum cleaner with plastic (not metal) nozzle.
Do not use domestic or general-purpose vacuum cleaners, even those with high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filters
- a thickened substance, such as shaving foam or petroleum jelly
- filler
- pliers
- paint brush/roller



- low-pressure water sprayer
- wet wipes
- adhesive tape
- asbestos waste disposal bags and labels.

Isolate the work area

Take steps to stop unauthorised people from entering the work area while the work is underway and until the area has been decontaminated at the end of the job:

- put barriers and signs up to keep people away from the work area
- close all access points – such as doors, windows or gates
- move items out of the way or cover and seal them with heavy-duty plastic sheeting, also use the sheeting on the ground/floor under and around the work area. This will save you having to decontaminate the items later.
- set up your decontamination area.

See [Section 6.0 of Working with or near asbestos – good practice guidelines](#) for more detailed instructions.

Put on your PPE and RPE

Make sure you are wearing the right PPE and RPE. See [Section 7.0 in Working with or near asbestos – good practice guidelines](#) for more detailed instructions.

To see more on RPE and PPE, watch these videos [How to wear a disposable respirator safely](#) and [How to wear a reusable respirator safely](#)

Doing the job

Safe work steps

Step 1

Make sure any components being worked on have been isolated from the power supply. For more information see your copy of *AS/NZS 4836 Safe working on or near low-voltage and extra low-voltage electrical installations and equipment*.

Step 2

When accessing the electrical components, first vacuum using an H-Class vacuum cleaner.

Step 3

Carefully wipe the front of the components using a wet wipe.

Step 4

To keep dust down when disturbing the switchboard, shadow vacuum using an H-class vacuum cleaner or you can use a low-pressure water spray or a thickened substance, such as petroleum jelly.

Once you have finished

Clean up and waste disposal

Put all disposable materials used during the work (such as polythene sheeting) in the asbestos waste bag then double bag it and tape it closed with a gooseneck tie. Clearly label it as containing asbestos.

- [Video: Disposing of asbestos waste and PPE safely](#)
- See [Section 10 of Working with or near asbestos: Guidance for tradespeople](#) for more detailed instructions.

Thoroughly decontaminate the work area and all reusable tools and equipment used during the work.

- [Video: How to decontaminate tools safely](#)
- See [Section 9 of Working with or near asbestos – good practice guidelines](#) for more detailed instructions.

Personal decontamination

You must thoroughly decontaminate yourself.

- [Video: Taking off your respirator and PPE safely](#)
- See [Section 9 of Working with or near asbestos – good practice guidelines](#) for more detailed written instructions.

Final checks

- Visually inspect the area to make sure it is clean.

Note: These safe work techniques reflect recommended good practice. You can carry out this work using different practices, but you need to achieve or exceed the same levels of safety provided by these practices.