

Recommended Practices for Controlling Asphalt Exposures during Tear-Offs of Asphalt Roofs



Introduction

Asphalt roof removal ("tear-off") operations can result in worker exposures to asphalt particulates (dust). Exposures are expected to be limited on jobs using manual slicing or prying methods to remove asphalt shingles, roll roofing and felt underlayments. Measurable particulate levels have been found on jobs using aggressive removal methods such as power roof cutters, power tear-off machines and hand or power saws. Asphalt particles may be inhaled; they can also be deposited onto the skin, resulting in the dermal absorption of some of the chemicals in asphalt. ARMA and NRCA recommend, as a matter of prudence and good industrial hygiene practice, that the following precautions be observed to reduce exposures when removing asphalt roofs.

Identify the Materials in the Existing Roof

The contractor should always identify the materials in the roof to be removed. Existing roofs may contain materials other than asphalt which are considered to be health hazards. For example, coal tar, a recognized carcinogen, is a particular concern because it has been used extensively in low-slope roof systems in the past and can easily be mistaken for asphalt. Contractors should comply with all applicable laws, as well as any recommended precautions in SDSs and manufacturer installation guides, intended to protect workers and others against health hazards associated with coal tar, asbestos, and any other hazardous material during removal of the existing roof.

Recommended Precautions for Asphalt Roof Removals

Observe the following precautions when removing an asphalt roof:

- Wherever possible, work upwind during tear-off activities.
- Roof material should be removed in an intact state to the extent feasible.
- Wear leather or cotton gloves (leather preferred).
- Wear goggles or face shields during use of aggressive manual or power tools or equipment that pulverize the roof material, such as power roof cutters, power tear-off machines and hand or power saws. Consider safety glasses that have added protection from airborne debris, such as foam padded safety glasses.
- Wash exposed areas of the skin with soap and water as soon as possible after each shift and, if possible, before eating, drinking, smoking, chewing tobacco or gum, applying cosmetics, or using toilet facilities. Fuels, solvents and other industrial chemicals should never be used to clean condensed fumes or asphalt from the skin.
- Do not eat, drink, smoke, chew tobacco or gum, apply cosmetics, or have open or exposed food and beverages, in areas where dusts from tear-off activities are present or may have been deposited on surfaces.
- Work clothing that comes into contact with dust or particulates from tear-off jobs should be removed as soon as possible after each workday, should be kept separate from other clothing, and should not be re-worn unless laundered.

- On jobs involving the use of aggressive manual removal methods or power tools or equipment, work with building management to ensure that appropriate measures are taken to prevent dust from entering the building through windows and other air intakes, for example, by covering or closing such intakes and/or temporarily shutting down the heating and ventilation system.

If you need more information, or have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact us:



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