

Recommended Work Practices for Removal of Resilient Floor Coverings

Supersedes Recommended Work Practices Published in August 2004



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RFCi
Resilient Floor Covering Institute

Recommended Work Practices for Removal of Resilient Floor Coverings

WARNING

Do not sand, dry sweep, dry scrape, drill, saw, beadblast, or mechanically chip or pulverize existing resilient flooring, backing, lining felt, asphaltic "cutback" adhesive, or other adhesive.

These products may contain asbestos fibers and/or crystalline silica.

Avoid creating dust. Inhalation of such dust is a cancer and respiratory tract hazard. Smoking by individuals exposed to asbestos fibers greatly increases the risk of serious bodily harm.

Unless positively certain that the product is a non-asbestos-containing material, you must presume it contains asbestos. Regulations may require that the material be tested to determine asbestos content.

Similarly, absent testing data or objective evidence that work with the product will **not** result in exposures to crystalline silica greater than allowed by applicable regulations, protection may be required.

RFCl's Recommended Work Practices for Removal of Resilient Floor Coverings are a defined set of instructions addressed to the task of removing all resilient floor covering structures.

IN CANADA

The Recommended Work Practices for the Removal of Resilient Floor Covering Materials are intended for use in the United States. The work practices for the removal of in-place resilient floor coverings and associated adhesives described in this publication have not been reviewed with either National or Provincial officials in Canada to determine their applicability when asbestos-containing or assumed to be asbestos-containing resilient floor covering materials are encountered . These work practices are recommended when removing resilient floor covering and its associated adhesives that have been determined not to be asbestos-containing.

To determine what are acceptable work practices and the associated requirements for the removal of resilient floor covering that is assumed to contain asbestos or has been determined to contain asbestos, you should contact your local or provincial officials.

As an alternative to the removal of any in-place resilient floor covering materials, refer to page 10 (Alternative to Removal of Existing Resilient Floor Coverings).

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NOTICE

Various Federal, State and local government agencies have regulations governing the removal of in-place asbestos-containing material. If you contemplate the removal of a resilient floor covering structure that contains (or is presumed to contain) asbestos, you must review and comply with all applicable regulations.

This booklet replaces all prior editions of the RFCI and Armstrong Recommended Work Practices Publications. Please note that these recommended work practices are subject to change as new practices are incorporated. It is your responsibility to determine that the recommended work practices you use are those in effect.

Important Information for Installers of Resilient Floor Coverings Concerning Existing Resilient Floor Covering Structures

- Vinyl asbestos tile and asphalt tile contain asbestos fibers, as did some asphaltic “cutback” adhesives and the backings of many sheet vinyl floorings and lining felts. The presence of the asbestos in these products is not readily identifiable.
- While resilient floor covering products manufactured today do not contain asbestos, the asbestos used in the older products was encapsulated in the matrix of the product. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recognizes that those products are non-friable (i.e. when dry cannot be crumbled, pulverized or reduced to powder by hand pressure) unless certain activities prohibited by the removal practices in this booklet occur.
- Unless positively certain that the product you intend to remove is a non-asbestos containing material, you must presume it contains asbestos. Regulations may require that the material be tested to determine asbestos content.
- RFCI’s Recommended Work Practices are a defined set of instructions addressed to the task of removing all resilient floor covering structures whether or not they contain asbestos. When RFCI’s Recommended Work Practices are followed, resilient floor covering structures that contain (or are presumed to contain) asbestos can be removed in a manner that will comply with the current Occupational Exposure to Asbestos Standard’s Permissible Exposure Limits (PEL) issued by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA).
- Numerous products, devices and techniques have been recently introduced and/or recommended for the removal of resilient floor covering structures. Before you use any practices other than those identified in this booklet for the removal of an in-place resilient floor-covering product that contains (or is presumed to contain) asbestos, you must determine that the practice meets all applicable regulations or standards including the OSHA standards for occupational exposure to asbestos and the EPA asbestos regulations. You must also determine that any materials used during the removal practice will be compatible with the new floor covering to be installed.

Mold and Mildew

Prior to removing an existing resilient floor following the **RFCI Recommended Work Practices for Removal of Resilient Floor Coverings** (unless state or local law requires other measures) or installing a new floor, if there are visible indications of mold or mildew or the presence of a strong musty odor in the area where resilient flooring is to be removed or installed, the source of the problem should be identified and corrected before proceeding with the flooring work. In virtually all situations, if there is a mold issue, there is or has been an excessive moisture issue. Visible signs of mold or mildew (such as discoloration) can indicate the presence of mold or mildew on the subfloor, on the underlayment, on the back of the flooring, and sometimes even on the floor surface. If mold or mildew is discovered during the removal or installation of resilient flooring, all flooring work should stop until the mold/mildew problem (and any related moisture problem) has been addressed. Before installing the new resilient flooring, make sure the underlayment and/or subfloor is allowed to thoroughly dry and that any residual effect of excessive moisture, mold, or structural damage has been corrected.

To deal with mold and mildew issues, you should refer to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) guidelines that address mold and mildew. Depending on the mold or mildew condition present, those remediation options range from cleanup measures using gloves and biocide to hiring a professional mold and mildew remediation contractor to address the condition. Remediation measures may require structural repairs such as replacing the underlayment and/or subfloor contaminated with mold and mildew as a result of prolonged exposure to moisture.

The EPA mold guidelines are contained in two publications “A Brief Guide to Mold, Moisture and Your Home” (EPA 402-K-02-003) and “Mold Remediation in Schools and Commercial Buildings” (EPA 402-K-01-001). Appendix B of the “Mold Remediation in Schools and Commercial Buildings” publication describes potential health effects from exposure to mold, such as allergic and asthma reactions and irritation to eyes, skin, nose and throat. These publications can be located on EPA’s website at www.epa.gov/iaq/molds

OSHA REQUIREMENTS

A. Asbestos

In August 1994, OSHA published revised asbestos standards which affect some of the operations described in this booklet. OSHA has determined that intact resilient floor covering materials can be removed under a “negative exposure assessment” in compliance with the revised standards by appropriately trained workers using the Recommended Work Practices.

- “Intact” is defined to mean that the asbestos-containing material has not crumbled, been pulverized, or otherwise deteriorated so that it is no longer likely to be bound with its matrix. The incidental breakage of flooring materials, or slicing of sheet vinyl floor covering with a sharp-edged instrument, during removal operations conducted in accordance with the Recommended Work Practices does not mean that the materials are not removed in an “intact” condition. OSHA has recognized that resilient floor covering materials are considered nonfriable if intact and generally do not emit airborne fibers unless subjected to sanding, sawing or other aggressive operations.
- Installers of resilient floor covering materials that plan to use the Recommended Work Practices outlined in this book to remove intact and nonfriable asbestos containing flooring materials are required to complete an 8-hour training program.
- Employers must designate a “competent person” with 4 hours of additional training to be responsible for the health and safety of the workers at the floor removal job site.
- OSHA has determined that the competent person can make a “negative exposure assessment” based upon data in the OSHA asbestos rulemaking record (including data from the Environ Reports) showing that use of the Recommended Work Practices during removal of intact flooring material consistently results in worker exposures below the levels permitted in the OSHA standards.
- Where other workers or persons may have access to the flooring removal worksite, the employer must establish a demarcated “regulated area” (e.g. using barrier tape or closing room doors to enclose a work area) and post warning signs.
- Workers who engage in the removal of asbestos-containing flooring materials for more than 30 days per year (one hour or more per day) must receive medical surveillance.
- Employers are required to maintain certain training and workplace and medical records.

OSHA REQUIREMENTS

B. Crystalline Silica

In March 2016, OSHA published a revised rule relating to occupational exposure to respirable crystalline silica which could affect some of the operations described in this booklet. In general, the revised rule established a new permissible exposure limit (PEL) of 50 ug/m³ for respirable silica. The rule also requires exposure assessments, the use of exposure control methods, respiratory protection, medical surveillance, hazard communication information, and recordkeeping.

More specifically, the revised standard requires employers:

- to assess employee exposures to silica if exposures may be at or above an action level of 25 ug/m³ (micrograms per cubic meter of air) when averaged over an eight hour day;
- to protect workers from respirable crystalline silica exposures above the permissible exposure limit of 50 ug/m³, when averaged over an eight hour day;
- to limit worker access to areas where they could be exposed to crystalline silica above the PEL;
- to use dust controls to protect workers from exposures above the PEL, and where that is not possible, to provide respirators;
- to use feasible housekeeping methods that do not create airborne dust;
- to establish and implement a written exposure control plan that identifies tasks that involve exposure and protection methods; and
- to offer medical exams every three years for workers who are exposed at or above the action level for at least 30 days per year; and to provide certain training and maintain certain records.

Most provisions of the rule took effect on January 23, 2018, except that the medical surveillance provisions will become applicable on June 23, 2020.

EPA LEAD-BASED PAINT REQUIREMENTS

Effective July 6, 2010, EPA has established training, certification, and work practice requirements for paid renovation, repair, or remodeling work that disturbs more than 6 square feet of lead-based paint per room within a 30 day period in a home (e.g., single-family, apartments) or a facility occupied by children under age of 6 (e.g., daycare center, preschool) built prior to 1978. 40 C.F.R. § 745.80 et seq. In these pre-1978 facilities, it is assumed that any painted surfaces contain lead paint, unless EPA-approved testing is performed to show that the disturbed surfaces are lead-free.

The removal or installation of resilient flooring in these pre-1978 buildings may involve disturbing or removing molding, baseboards, or floors (e.g., wood) that have been painted with lead-based paint or cutting off the bottom of painted doors or molding to allow the new floors to fit. To determine whether more than 6 square feet in a room is disturbed, multiply the total length of the disturbed painted material by its height (both numbers in feet). For example, if a 4 inch high baseboard (1/3 foot) is being removed as part of an installation or removal, over 18 linear feet of this baseboard would have to be removed to trigger the rule (1/3 foot x 18 feet= 6 square feet). For more examples, see <http://www.epa.gov/lead/pubs/rrp-faq.pdf>.

If the rule is triggered the following training, certification, and work practices are required:

- Employees performing the work must have completed a lead-safe work practices training course of 8 hours in length approved by EPA, which training is valid for 5 years.
- The firm performing the work must be lead-safe certified by EPA, which requires the submission of an application and fee to EPA. The application fee is typically \$300 for a five year certification and it may take up to 90 days to process the application. The application procedures for each state can be found at the link in the paragraph above.
- Before beginning work, your firm must: (1) notify the residents of the affected homes or the parents of the affected children by providing the EPA Renovate Right pamphlet (<http://www.epa.gov/lead/pubs/renovaterightbrochure.pdf>); and (2) must maintain its notification records for 3 years.
- Your firm and employees must use lead-safe work practices, including posting warning signs; isolating the work area with plastic sheeting or other materials; removing or covering furniture; cleaning and inspecting the worksite when the work is finished; and disposing of any waste in a safe manner.

Some states operate their own lead-based paint programs and may have more stringent requirements than the EPA rule. See <http://www.epa.gov/lead/pubs/renovation.htm#states> for a list of states with their own rules.

GENERAL RULES FOR REMOVAL OF RESILIENT FLOOR COVERING

When following the Recommended Work Practices there are several general rules to follow:

Never sand, dry scrape, drill, saw, beadblast, or mechanically chip or pulverize any resilient flooring, backing, lining felt, asphaltic “cutback” adhesive, or other adhesive to remove them from the floor. See “Warning Statement” on page one.

- Unless positively certain the product you intend to remove is a non-asbestos containing material, you must presume it contains asbestos. Regulations may require that the material be tested to determine asbestos content.
- Removal of existing floor covering should be considered the last alternative.
- Use a vacuum equipped with HEPA filter, disposable dust bag, and metal floor attachment (no brush).
- All sheet floor removals must be done using detergent solution.
- All felt scraping must be done wet.
- Prior to removal, all tile must be wetted (except in cases where heat will be applied).
- Do not dry sweep.
- Material removed must be placed in heavy-duty impermeable bags at least 6 mils thick or in a leak-tight container, properly labeled and disposed of in an authorized landfill.

ALTERNATIVES TO REMOVAL OF EXISTING RESILIENT FLOOR COVERINGS

Removal of the in-place resilient floor should be considered the final alternative. It is preferred you leave the existing resilient floor covering in place and go over the top (single flooring layer only) with the new floor.

Alternatives to the removal of an existing resilient floor over approved subfloors are:

- Installing directly over a single layer of approved existing resilient flooring.
- Filling the embossing of the in-place resilient flooring with embossing leveler before installation (residential use only).
- Covering existing resilient flooring on an approved suspended wood subfloor with a recommended wood underlayment.

When you plan to install a new resilient sheet or tile floor covering over an existing resilient floor covering, follow the installation instructions published by the manufacturer. Those instructions will tell you what must be done to the existing surface before the new resilient floor covering can be installed. Remove wax and other finishes by wet stripping only.

Contact a local established floorcovering dealer for additional information.

REMOVAL OF RESILIENT SHEET FLOORING

Supplies and Tools

- Safety glasses and gloves
- Stiff-bladed wall or floor scraper
- Utility or hook knife
- Tank-type High Efficiency Particulate Air (HEPA) wet/dry vacuum cleaner with disposable dust bag and metal floor attachment (no brush)
- Hand-held tank sprayer
- Large-size heavy-duty impermeable trash bags (at least 6 mils thick) or closed leak-tight containers with ties, tape, or string to tie the bags shut, and appropriate labels stating, for example “Caution- Contains Asbestos. Avoid Opening or Breaking Bag or Container. Breathing Asbestos is Hazardous to Your Health”. It may also be appropriate to include in the label a warning regarding the presence of crystalline silica.
- A liquid dishwashing detergent which is stated to contain anionic, nonionic and amphoteric surfactants. Mix this specified liquid dishwashing detergent with water to make a dilute solution (16 oz. specified liquid dishwashing detergent in one gallon of water)
- Ground fault circuit interrupter for electrical connection of the HEPA vacuum and any other electrical connections required



REMOVAL OF FULLY-ADHERED RESILIENT SHEET FLOORING

WARNING

Do not sand, dry sweep, dry scrape, drill, saw, beadblast or mechanically chip or pulverize existing resilient flooring, backing, lining felt, asphaltic “cutback” adhesive, or other adhesive. See “Warning Statement” on page one.

- Remove all furniture and appliances from the work area.
- Remove any binding strips or other restrictive moldings from doorways, walls, etc.
- Prepare the specified liquid dishwashing detergent solution (16 oz. of specified liquid dishwashing detergent to one gallon of water) and pour into a hand sprayer.
- Before removal begins, vacuum the entire floor using a HEPA vacuum with a metal floor attachment.

WARNING

Electrical shock hazard exists. Use a ground fault interrupter for any electrical connections of equipment used in a wet environment

- Make a series of parallel slices 4” to 8” apart through the top layer of the flooring and about halfway through the backing, parallel to the wall, for the entire floor.

WARNING

Resilient flooring becomes slippery when wet with the specified liquid dishwashing detergent solution. Use caution to contain the solution in the immediate work area.

- Wear layer removal: One worker starts at the end of the room farthest from the entrance door and pries up the corner of the strip, separating the backing from the wear layer. As the strip is being removed, another worker sprays a constant mist of the specified liquid dishwashing detergent solution into the delamination nip point to minimize any airborne dust particles. When done properly, the felt remaining on the floor and on the back of the strip will be thoroughly wet. Do only one three strip area at a time. Stand on the remaining floor covering or clean floor (to the extent feasible, minimize standing on the felt). The sliced strips should be peeled from the backing by pulling or rolling around a core which will control the stripping angle to create a uniform tension (some resilient flooring wear layers may not be readily strippable and may require wet-scraping). Tie or tape the removed material securely and place in the heavy-duty impermeable trash bag or closed leak-tight container for disposal.

- Remove and dispose of each succeeding strip in the above manner. Minimize walking on the exposed felt to the extent feasible. Worker footwear must be cleaned or removed before leaving work area. Close full bags tightly, and seal securely for disposal. Identify with an appropriate label stating, for example “Caution-Contains Asbestos. Asbestos is Hazardous to Your Health.” It may also be appropriate to include in the label a warning regarding the presence of crystalline silica. Dispose in an approved landfill only.
- Occasionally, parts of the top or inner layer will stick to the backing. This can often be eliminated by peeling in the opposite direction. The stiff-bladed scraper may aid in the removal or peeling of these layers.
- Wet-scraping residual felt :
 - (1) After three strips of flooring material are removed, any residual felt must be wet scraped. Thoroughly wet the residual felt with the specified liquid dishwashing detergent solution. Wait a few minutes to allow the specified liquid dishwashing detergent solution to soak into the felt.
 - (2) Stand on the remaining floor covering to the extent feasible (not the felt) and use the stiff bladed scraper to scrape up the wet felt.
 - (3) Rewet the felt if the specified liquid dishwashing detergent solution has not completely penetrated, if drying occurs, or if dry felt is exposed during scraping. Pick up the scrapings while still wet as they are removed from the floor and place in a heavy-duty impermeable trash bag or leak-tight container. Wet-scrape all felt from this floor area before proceeding further.



PRECAUTION:

Excessive moisture can cause permanent damage to wood underlayments. It is the installer's responsibility to use the correct amount of specified liquid dishwashing detergent solution to prevent underlayment damage. A floor that has been wet-scraped must be allowed to dry before installing any new resilient flooring.

- (4) When this floor area has been cleaned free of felt, vacuum with HEPA vacuum cleaner with the metal floor attachment. Position the vacuum cleaner so that the discharge air does not blow on the area being cleaned.
- (5) Repeat the above on the next series of strips.
- (6) Repeat this operation until the felt has been removed from the whole floor. Close full bags tightly and seal securely for disposal. Identify with an appropriate label stating, for example "Caution-Contains Asbestos. Avoid Opening or Breaking Bag or Container. Breathing Asbestos is Hazardous to Your Health." It may also be appropriate to include in the label a warning regarding the presence of crystalline silica. Dispose in an approved landfill only.
- (7) When the entire floor has been removed, let it dry and vacuum with HEPA vacuum cleaner with the metal floor attachment. Position the vacuum cleaner so that the discharge air does not blow on the area being cleaned.
- (8) After vacuuming, used HEPA filters and cleaner bags should be removed according to the manufacturer's instructions and placed in a heavy-duty impermeable trash bag or leaktight container with an appropriate label stating, for example "Caution-Contains Asbestos Avoid Opening or Breaking Bag or Container. Breathing Asbestos is Hazardous to Your Health." It may also be appropriate to include in the label a warning regarding the presence of crystalline silica. Close and seal the trash bag securely for disposal. Dispose in an approved landfill only.
- (9) The floor is now ready to have a new resilient floor covering installed. Follow the manufacturer's installation instructions.

REMOVAL OF UNADHERED (LOOSE-LAY) OR PERIPHERALLY-ADHERED RESILIENT SHEET FLOORING

WARNING



Do not sand, dry sweep, dry scrape, drill, saw, beadblast, or mechanically chip or pulverize existing resilient flooring, backing, lining felt, asphaltic “cutback” adhesive, or other adhesive. See “Warning Statement” on page one.

- Remove all furniture and appliances from the work area.
- Remove any binding strips or other restrictive moldings from doorways, walls, etc.
- Prepare the specified liquid dishwashing detergent solution (16 oz. of specified liquid dishwashing detergent to one gallon of water) and pour into a hand sprayer.
- Before removal begins, vacuum the entire floor using a HEPA vacuum with a metal floor attachment.

WARNING



Electrical shock hazard exists. Use a ground fault interrupter for any electrical connections of equipment used in a wet environment

- If flooring is unadhered, start at the end of the room farthest from the entrance doorway and slice a strip 18” wide in the unadhered flooring. One worker removes the sliced strip while another worker sprays the specified liquid dishwashing detergent solution directly into the separation nip point. Minimize standing on the exposed subfloor during the removal process to the extent feasible.

CAUTION



Resilient flooring becomes slippery when wet with specified liquid dishwashing detergent solution. Use caution to contain the solution in the immediate work area. Standing on a new sheet of plywood or non-slip surface while working is recommended.

- Roll the wet strip tightly and tie or tape securely so it will not unroll. Place it in a heavy-duty, impermeable trash bag or closed leak-tight container big enough to accommodate several rolls for disposal.

Use this method for nonbonded areas of peripherally-adhered floors. To remove bonded areas, follow instructions under "Removal of Fully-Adhered Resilient Sheet Flooring."

- Clean the exposed floor with a HEPA vacuum cleaner with the metal floor attachment. Position the vacuum cleaner so that the discharge air does not blow on the area being cleaned.
- Repeat the above, slicing, rolling and disposing of one strip at a time and cleaning the newly exposed area immediately until the entire floor covering has been removed. Let the floor dry, then vacuum with a HEPA vacuum cleaner using metal floor attachment.
- After vacuuming, used HEPA filters and cleaner bags should be removed according to manufacturer's instructions and placed in a heavy-duty impermeable trash bag or leak-tight container with an appropriate label stating, for example "Caution-Contains Asbestos . Avoid Opening or Breaking Container. Breathing Asbestos is Hazardous to Your Health:" It may also be appropriate to include in the label a warning regarding the presence of crystalline silica. Close and seal the trash bags or leak-tight container securely for disposal. Dispose in an approved landfill only.
- The floor is now ready for installation of new floor covering using the manufacturer's installation instructions.

REMOVAL OF RESILIENT TILE

Supplies and Tools

- Safety glasses and gloves
- Short or long-handled scraper (DO NOT USE SPUD BAR OR MECHANICAL CHIPPER)
- Hammer
- Commercial-type hand-held hot-air gun or a radiant heat source such as an infrared machine
- Large size, heavy-duty labeled, impermeable trash bags with minimum 6 mil thickness (or closed leak-tight containers), with ties, tape or string to tie shut, and tags for labeling
- Tank-type High Efficiency Particulate Air (HEPA) wet/dry vacuum cleaner with disposable dust bag and metal floor attachment (no brush)
- Hand-held tank sprayer
- Ground fault circuit interrupter for electrical connection of the HEPA vacuum and any other electrical connections required



REMOVAL PROCEDURE

WARNING

Do not sand, dry sweep, dry scrape, drill, saw, beadblast, or mechanically chip or pulverize existing resilient flooring, backing lining felt, asphaltic “cutback” adhesive, or other adhesive. See “Warning Statement” on page one.

- Remove all furniture and appliances from the work area. Remove any binding strips or other restrictive moldings from doorways, walls, etc.
- Before removal begins, vacuum the entire floor using a HEPA vacuum with a metal floor attachment.
- Floor tiles must be wetted (misted with hand sprayer) before actual removal begins (unless heat will be used to remove tile s).

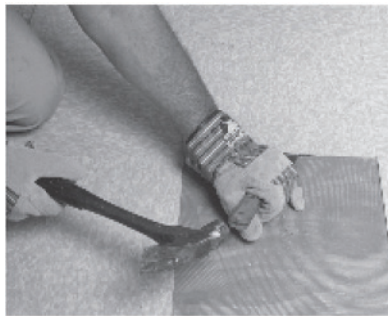
WARNING

Electrical shock hazard exists. Use a ground fault interrupter for any electrical connections of equipment used in a wet environment.

- Those areas normally exposed to heavy foot traffic patterns usually have tiles adhered the tightest. In starting the tile removal process, select those areas which receive the least traffic. Try to remove individual tiles in one piece although some breakage of tiles is unavoidable.
- Start the removal by carefully wedging a short or long handled scraper in the seam of two adjoining tiles and gradually forcing the edge of one of the tiles up and away from the floor. Continue to force the balance of the tile up by working the scraper beneath the tile and exerting both a forward pressure and a twisting action on the blade to promote release of the tile from the adhesive and the floor.



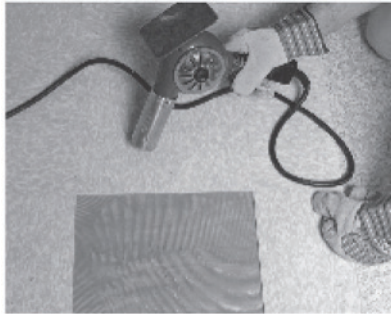
- After the tiles are removed, place them, without further breakage, in a heavy-duty impermeable trash bag or closed leak-tight container which will be used for disposal. Removed tiles can be placed in empty tile cartons first and then placed in the heavy-duty impermeable trash bag. To prevent tearing of the heavy-duty impermeable trash bag, place only one full carton of removed tile in a bag.
- With the removal of the first tile, accessibility of other tiles is improved. Force the scraper under the exposed edge of another tile, and continue to exert a prying, twisting force to the scraper as it is moved under the tile until the tile releases from the floor. Remove and dispose of each tile in the manner described above.
- Minimize walking on the exposed adhesive to the extent feasible. Worker footwear must be cleaned or removed before leaving work area. Close full bags tightly and seal securely for disposal. Identify with an appropriate label stating, for example "Caution-Contains Asbestos. Avoid Opening or Breaking Container. Breathing Asbestos is Hazardous to Your Health." It may also be appropriate to include in the label a warning regarding the presence of crystalline silica. Dispose in an approved landfill only.
- Some tiles will release quite easily while others require varying degrees of force. Where the adhesive is spread heavily or the tile is bonded tightly, it may prove easier to force the scraper under the tightly adhered areas by striking the scraper handle with a hammer, using blows of moderate force while maintaining the scraper at a 25° to 30° angle to the floor.



CAUTION

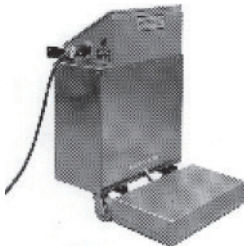
Wear safety glasses when using this procedure.

- If you encounter areas where even the above methods will not remove the tiles, the removal procedure can be simplified by thoroughly heating the tiles with a hot air gun or a radiant heat source until the heat penetrates through the tile and softens the adhesive.
- Alternatively, without first prying up floor tiles using a scraper, a heat source like a hot air gun or infrared heat machine can be used to apply heat to the floor tiles and then the tiles may be removed by hand or by using a scraper. (Wetting the tiles is not required for this alternative removal method). When using this procedure, walking on exposed adhesive may be unavoidable. Worker footwear must be cleaned or removed before leaving the work area.



CAUTION

Handle the hot-air gun or radiant heat source carefully to avoid burn injury. Do not handle the heated tiles or adhesive without suitable glove protection. Do not use a blowtorch or open flame. Use caution not to burn or char tiles. Work area must be adequately ventilated.





- When using an infrared heat machine, follow manufacturer's instructions.
- After tiles are removed, place them in a heavy-duty impermeable trash bag or other closed leak-tight container without further breakage. Removed tiles can be placed in empty tile cartons first and then placed in the heavy duty impermeable trash bag s. To prevent tearing of the heavy-duty impermeable trash bag, place only one full carton of removed tile in a bag.
- Close the full bags of removed tile tightly and seal securely for disposal. Identify with an appropriate label stating, for example "Caution- Contains Asbestos. Avoid Opening or Breaking Container. Breathing Asbestos is Hazardous to Your Health." It may also be appropriate to include in the label a warning regarding the presence of crystalline silica. Dispose in an approved landfill only.

WARNING

Do not sand, dry sweep, dry scrape, drill, saw, beadblast, or mechanically chip or pulverize existing resilient flooring, backing, lining felt, asphaltic "cutback" adhesive, or other adhesive. See "Warning Statement" on page one.

- See Section 5, "Removal of Residual Adhesives" for proper treatment of remaining adhesive.

REMOVAL OF RESIDUAL ADHESIVE

The removal of latex based adhesives commonly used with vinyl sheet floors and some tiles can be accomplished by wetting the adhesive residue (which will soften the adhesive) and scraping. Do not use an excessive amount of water which can damage wood subfloors. The treatment of residual asphaltic “cutback” adhesive, which is covered in this section, is dependent upon the type of new resilient floor covering material to be installed and the type of subfloor. Recommendations for the treatment of residual asphaltic “cutback” adhesive are shown on pages 21 through 26.

NOTE

There are commercial adhesive removal products containing solvents that are effective in removing cutback or emulsion adhesives and comply with OSHA requirements (e.g. flashpoint greater than 140° F). These products may be used for adhesive removal; however, they may leave a solvent residue within the subfloor that can adversely affect the new adhesive or floor covering. Thus, the warranties provided by the manufacturers of new floor covering materials will not cover instances where subfloor conditions damage their products or affect their installation.

The use of asbestos encapsulants or bridging materials over asphaltic adhesive is not recommended as those products may affect the bonding properties of the new adhesive. The application of asphaltic “cutback” adhesives, if recommended by the replacement flooring manufacture, has been demonstrated to be a suitable adhesive when applied over existing cutback adhesive. The use of any new adhesive must be consistent with the installation recommendations of the replacement-flooring manufacturer.

Supplies and Tools

- Safety glasses and gloves
- Stiff-bladed wall or floor scraper
- Tank-type High Efficiency Particulate Air (HEPA) wet/dry vacuum cleaner with disposable dust bag and metal floor attachment (no brush)
- Large-size, heavy-duty, impermeable trash bags (or closed leak-tight containers) with ties, tape, or string to tie the bags shut, and tags for labeling.
- Slip-resistant shoes or rubber boots
- Ground fault circuit interrupter for electrical connection of the HEPA vacuum and any other electrical connections required
- Hand-held sprayer

- A liquid dishwashing detergent which is stated to contain anionic, nonionic and amphoteric surfactants. Mix this specified liquid dishwashing detergent with water to make a dilute solution (1 oz. of the specified liquid dishwashing detergent to one gallon of water)
- Floor machine fitted with 3M black floor pad (or equivalent)
- Removal solution-e.g. "mop on, mop off, no machine scrub," tripping solution See note on page 23 regarding use of other solutions
- Water-absorbent material



RESIDUAL ASPHALTIC "CUTBACK" ADHESIVE

CONCRETE SUBFLOOR

WOOD UNDERLAYMENT SUBFLOOR

New Material to Be Installed	Removal of Residual Adhesive	Alternative to Removal	Removal of Residual Adhesive	Alternative to Removal
Resilient floor tile to be installed using cutback adhesive.	Residual adhesive must be wet-scraped so that no ridges or puddles are evident and what remains is a thin, smooth film. See wet-scraping of residual adhesive.	Application of a cementitious underlayment that is approved by the underlayment manufacturer for use over residual asphaltic "cutback" adhesive. ²	The use of a cutback adhesive over wood underlayment subfloor is not recommended.	The use of a cutback adhesive over wood underlayment subfloor is not recommended
Resilient floor tile to be installed using an adhesive other than cutback adhesive.	Residual adhesive must be wet-scraped so that no ridges or puddles are evident and what remains is a thin, smooth film. See wet-scraping of residual adhesive.	Application of a cementitious underlayment that is approved by the underlayment manufacturer for use over residual asphaltic "cutback" adhesive. ²	Complete removal of Wood Underlayment. See Complete Removal of Wood Underlayment Under Existing Tile.	Covering residual asphaltic "cutback" adhesive on an approved wood subfloor with a recommended wood underlayment. ² When installing this new wood underlayment, felt or polyethylene sheeting may be placed over the residual adhesive to prevent a cracking or tacky sound when walking on the floor.
Any vinyl-backed sheet flooring	100% of the residual adhesive must be removed from the area to be covered. See removal of residual adhesive.	Application of a cementitious underlayment that is approved by the underlayment manufacturer for use over residual asphaltic "cutback" adhesive. ²	Complete removal of Wood Underlayment. See Complete Removal of Wood Underlayment Under Existing Tile	Covering residual asphaltic "cutback" adhesive on an approved wood subfloor with a recommended wood underlayment. ² When installing this new wood underlayment, felt or polyethylene sheeting may be placed over the residual adhesive to prevent a cracking or tacky sound when walking on the floor.
Felt-backed sheet flooring.	Enough of the residual adhesive must be removed so that 80% to 100% of the original substrate of the overall area is exposed. ¹ See removal of residual adhesive.	Application of a cementitious underlayment that is approved by the underlayment manufacturer for use over residual asphaltic "cutback" adhesive. ²	Complete removal of Wood Underlayment. See Complete Removal of Wood Underlayment Under Existing Tile	Covering residual asphaltic "cutback" adhesive on an approved wood subfloor with a recommended wood underlayment. ² When installing this new wood underlayment, felt or polyethylene sheeting may be placed over the residual adhesive to prevent a cracking or tacky sound when walking on the floor.

¹ Amount of adhesive which must be removed varies. Check with manufacturer of replacement felt-backed sheet flooring for requirements.

² All warranties and/or guarantees concerning underlayment's performance rest with the underlayment manufacturer and not with the resilient floor covering manufacturer.

WET-SCRAPING RESIDUAL ADHESIVE

WARNING

Do not sand, dry sweep, dry scrape, drill, saw, beadblast, or mechanically chip or pulverize existing resilient flooring, backing, lining felt, asphaltic “cutback” adhesive, or other adhesive. See “Warning Statement” on page one.

If new resilient floor tile is to be installed over a concrete subfloor using an asphaltic adhesive, the residual asphaltic “cutback” adhesive must be left so that no ridges or puddles are evident and what remains is a thin, smooth film. This can be accomplished by wet-scraping the residual adhesive.

Wet-Scraping residual asphaltic “cutback” adhesive:

- Moisten an area with water mixed with the specified liquid dishwashing detergent (1 oz. specified liquid dishwashing detergent to one gallon of water) to aid in wetting the adhesive. Make sure that the area stays moist. Wet-scrape with a stiff-bladed wall or floor scraper removing ridges and any loose adhesive. Make sure the adhesive is kept wet.
- Place loosened adhesive residue into a heavy-duty impermeable trash bag or leak-tight container with an appropriate label stating, for example: “Caution -Contains Asbestos. Avoid Opening or Breaking Container. Breathing Asbestos is Hazardous to Your Health.” It may also be appropriate to include in the label a warning regarding the presence of crystalline silica. Close and seal the trash bag securely for disposal. Dispose in an approved landfill only.
- Wet vacuum standing water with the HEPA vacuum cleaner.
- Continue above steps until what remains of the residual asphaltic “cutback” adhesive is a thin, smooth film.
- Clean the entire floor with the HEPA vacuum cleaner using the metal floor attachment.
- After vacuuming, used HEPA filters and cleaner bags should be removed according to manufacturer’s instructions and placed in a heavy-duty, impermeable trash bag or leak tight container with an appropriate label stating, for example: “Caution-Contains Asbestos. Avoid Opening or Breaking Container. Breathing Asbestos is Hazardous to Your Health.” It may also be appropriate to include in the label a warning regarding the presence of crystalline silica. Close and seal the trash bags or containers securely for disposal. Dispose in an approved landfill only.



COMPLETE REMOVAL OF ASPHALTIC “CUTBACK” ADHESIVE

WARNING

Do not sand, dry sweep, dry scrape, drill, saw, beadblast or mechanically chip or pulverize existing resilient flooring, backing, lining felt, asphaltic “cutback” adhesive, or other adhesive. See “Warning Statement” on page one.

REMOVAL METHOD

- Start in corner of the room farthest from the entrance door. Apply the removal solution (e.g. “mop on, mop off, no machine scrub,” stripping solution) by using a hand sprayer or mop over an area of residual adhesive so that the adhesive in this area always remains wet during its removal. Allow the area to soak for 5-10 minutes. Remove the adhesive using a floor machine equipped with a 3M black floor pad (or equivalent), ensuring that the floor is kept wet in the area where the machine is operating.


WARNING

Electrical shock hazard exists. Use a ground fault circuit interrupter for any electrical connections of equipment used in a wet environment.

- Occasionally push away the adhesive slurry from the subfloor with a wall or floor scraper or squeegee to check for complete removal. Continue to use the floor machine, equipped with black pad, in the same area until the concrete subfloor is cleaned to the degree necessary for the new floor installation.
- Adhesive around the edge of the room and in areas that were missed or difficult to reach with the machine can be removed with a hand-held piece of the black floor pad using the above procedures.

WARNING

Electrical shock hazard exists. Use a ground fault interrupter for any electrical connections of equipment used in a wet environment.

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- Wet HEPA vacuum the adhesive slurry. When the HEPA vacuum is full, place commercially suitable water absorbent into the HEPA container until the adhesive slurry is absorbed. An absorbent material may be used on the slurry to absorb the adhesive residue. Place the adhesive waste from the HEPA vacuum or floor into heavy-duty, impermeable bags or leak-tight containers with an appropriate label stating, for example “Caution-Contains Asbestos Avoid Creating Dust. Avoid Opening or Breaking Container. Breathing Asbestos May Cause Bodily Harm.” It may also be appropriate to include in the label a warning regarding the presence of crystalline silica. Close and seal the trash bag securely for disposal. Dispose in an approved landfill only.
 - Rinse floor area with clean water using a hand sprayer or mop. Worker footwear should also be cleaned and rinsed.
 - Wet-vacuum standing water with HEPA vacuum cleaner.
 - Continue above steps until the entire room is complete.
 - Allow subfloor to dry and vacuum with a HEPA vacuum with metal floor attachment.
 - Minimize walking on the wet adhesive to the extent feasible. Worker footwear must be cleaned or removed before leaving the work area.

COMPLETE REMOVAL OF WOOD UNDERLAYMENT

Supplies and Tools

- Safety glasses and gloves
- Chisel
- Hammer or mallet
- Short and long-handled pry bars
- Utility or hook knife
- Stiff-bladed wall or floor scraper
- Large-size, heavy-duty, impermeable trash bags (or leak-tight container) with ties, tape, or string to tie the bag shut and tag for labeling
- Tank-type High Efficiency Particulate Air (HEPA) wet/dry vacuum cleaner with disposable dust bags and metal floor attachment (no brush)
- Hand sprayer
- A liquid dishwashing detergent which is stated to contain anionic, nonionic and amphoteric surfactants
- 6-mil polyethylene sheeting
- Duct tape
- Ground fault circuit interrupter for electrical connection of the HEPA vacuum and any other electrical connections required
- For tile removal only-Commercial-type, handheld, hot-air gun or a radiant heat source such as infrared machine



COMPLETE REMOVAL OF WOOD UNDERLAYMENT (SUBFLOOR) UNDER EXISTING SHEET FLOORING

WARNING

Do not sand, dry sweep, dry scrape, drill, saw, beadblast, or mechanically chip or pulverize existing resilient flooring, backing, lining felt, asphaltic "cutback" adhesive, or other adhesive. See "Warning Statement" on page one.

- Remove all furniture and appliances from the work area.
- Remove any binding strips or other restrictive moldings from doorways, walls, etc.
- Prepare the specified liquid dishwashing detergent solution (16 oz. of specified liquid dishwashing detergent to one gallon of water) and pour into a hand sprayer.
- Before removal begins, vacuum the entire floor using a HEPA vacuum with a metal floor attachment

WARNING

Electrical shock hazard exists. Use a ground fault interrupter for any electrical connections of equipment used in a wet environment.

- Starting at the doorway or a floor ventilation vent, locate a joint in an underlayment board.
- Slice a strip of flooring 4 to 8 inches wide centered over the underlayment joint in the panel to be removed. Slice through the top and inner layers of flooring and about halfway through the backing. Continue this procedure for all underlayment joints over the entire floor.

CAUTION

Resilient flooring becomes slippery when wet with specified liquid dishwashing detergent solution. Use caution to contain the solution in the immediate work area.

- One worker pries up the corner of a strip, separating the backing from the wear layer. As the strip is being removed, another worker sprays a constant mist of the specified liquid dishwashing detergent solution into the delamination nip point to minimize any airborne dust particles. When done properly, the felt remaining on the floor and on the back of the strip will be thoroughly wet. Stand on the remaining floor covering or clean floor (do not stand on the felt).

The sliced strips should be peeled from the backing by pulling or rolling around a core which will control the stripping angle to create a uniform tension (some resilient flooring wear layers may not be readily strippable and may require wet-scraping). Tie or tape the removed material securely and place in a heavy-duty, impermeable, trash bag or closed leak tight container for disposal.

- Remove and dispose of each succeeding strip in the above manner. Minimize walking on the exposed felt to the extent feasible. Worker footwear must be cleaned or removed before leaving work area. Close full bags tightly, and seal securely for disposal. Identify with an appropriate label stating, for example "Caution-Contains Asbestos Avoid Opening or Breaking Container. Breathing Asbestos is Hazardous to Your Health." It may also be appropriate to include in the label a warning regarding the presence of crystalline silica. Dispose in an approved landfill only.
- Occasionally, parts of the top or inner layer will stick to the backing. This can often be eliminated by peeling in the opposite direction. The stiff bladed scraper may aid in the removal or peeling of these layers.

WARNING

Do not sand, dry sweep, dry scrape, drill, saw, beadblast, or mechanically chip or pulverize existing resilient flooring, backing, lining felt, asphaltic "cutback" adhesive, or other adhesive. See "Warning Statement" on page one.

- Remove all furniture and appliances from the work area.
- Remove any binding strips or other restrictive moldings from doorways, walls, etc.
- Prepare the specified liquid dishwashing detergent solution (16 oz. of specified liquid dishwashing detergent to one gallon of water) and pour into a hand sprayer.
- Before removal begins, vacuum the entire floor using a HEPA vacuum with a metal floor attachment
- Wet-scraping residual felt-follow instructions for wet-scraping residual felt on Page 12.
- For procedures for removing wood underlayment boards see Page 32.

COMPLETE REMOVAL OF WOOD UNDERLAYMENT (SUBFLOOR) UNDER EXISTING TILE FLOORING

- Before removal begins, the entire floor is vacuumed using a HEPA vacuum with a metal floor attachment.

WARNING

Electrical shock hazard exists. Use a ground fault interrupter for any electrical connections of equipment used in a wet environment.

- Floor tiles must be wetted (misted with hand sprayer) before actual removal begins (unless heat will be used to remove tiles).

WARNING

Resilient flooring becomes slippery when wet with the specified liquid dishwashing detergent solution. Use caution to contain the solution in the immediate work area.

- Starting at the doorway or a floor ventilation vent, locate a joint in an underlayment board.
- Start the removal of the tile at the underlayment joint by carefully wedging the scraper in the seam of two adjoining tiles and gradually forcing the edge of one of the tiles up and away from the floor. Do not intentionally break off pieces of the tile, but continue to force the balance of the tile up by working the scraper beneath the tile and exerting both a forward pressure and a twisting action of the blade to promote release of the tile from the adhesive and the floor. Continue to remove tiles in this manner at all underlayment joints until all board joints are exposed.
- After the tiles are removed place them, without further breakage into smaller pieces, in a heavy-duty impermeable trash bag or closed leak-tight container which will be used for disposal. Removed tiles can be placed in empty tile cartons first and then placed in heavy-duty, impermeable, trash bags. To prevent tearing of the heavy-duty, impermeable, trash bag, place only one full carton of removed tile in a bag.
- With the removal of the first tile, accessibility of the other tiles is improved. Force the scraper under the exposed edge of another tile, and continue to exert a prying, twisting force to the scraper as it is moved under the tile until the tile releases from the underlayment. Remove and dispose of each tile in the manner above. Minimize walking on the exposed adhesive to the extent feasible. Worker footwear must be cleaned or removed before leaving area. Close full bags or leak-tight container tightly and seal securely for disposal. Identify with an appropriate label stating, for example "Caution-Contains Asbestos. Avoid Opening or Breaking Container. Breathing Asbestos is Hazardous to Your Health." It may also be appropriate to

include in the label a warning regarding the presence of crystalline silica. Dispose in an approved landfill only.

- Some tiles will release quite easily while others require varying degrees of force. Where the adhesive is spread heavily or the tile is bonded tightly, it may prove easier to force the scraper through the tightly adhered areas by striking the scraper handle with a hammer, using blows of moderate force while maintaining the scraper at a 25° to 30° angle to the floor.
- If you encounter areas where even the above methods will not remove the tiles, the removal procedure can be simplified by thoroughly heating the tiles with a hot-air gun or a radiant heat source until the heat penetrates through the tile and softens the adhesive.
- When using automated infrared heating machines, follow the manufacturer's instructions.

WARNING

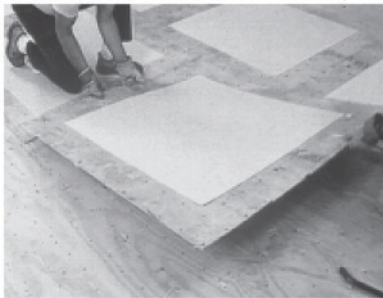
Handle the hot-air gun or radiant heat source carefully to avoid burn injury. Do not handle the heated tiles or adhesive without suitable glove protection. Do not use a blowtorch or open flame. Use caution not to burn or char tiles. Work area must be adequately ventilated.

REMOVAL OF WOOD UNDERLAYMENT BOARDS

WARNING

Do not sand, dry sweep, dry scrape, drill, saw, beadblast or mechanically chip or pulverize existing resilient flooring, backing, lining felt, asphaltic “cutback” adhesive, or other adhesive. See “Warning Statement” on page one.

- After all felt from sheet flooring has been wet-scraped or tiles removed from the underlayment joints, drive a chisel, using a hammer or mallet, between the underlayment board and the subfloor. Use the chisel to pry up the underlayment enough to insert a pry bar and remove the chisel. Slowly and carefully use pry bars to pry up the underlayment board a little at a time until the board is completely loose and can be removed.
- Caution must be used to avoid breaking the underlayment board. The underlayment board should be removed in one piece. If the underlayment board breaks, slice through the sheet resilient flooring at the break and spray any exposed felt with the specified liquid dishwashing detergent solution. Allow the specified liquid dishwashing detergent solution to penetrate for a few minutes, then continue lifting the broken underlayment. In the case of a broken underlayment board with tile adhered, wet (mist) the broken tile and carefully remove any loose pieces.



- Wear heavy gloves and be careful of wood splinters and fasteners sticking out of the back of the underlayment. Each underlayment board (or piece of board) should be removed from the work area as soon as it has been pried up to avoid injuries (such as stepping on a nail). Fasteners protruding from removed board should be flattened with a hammer. Place removed underlayment boards on skids with the nails pointing downward. Wrap skid with 6-mil polyethylene plastic sheeting and secure with duct tape. Identify with an appropriate label stating, for example “Caution-Contains Asbestos. Avoid Opening or Breaking Container. Breathing Asbestos is Hazardous to Your Health.” It may also be appropriate to include in the label a warning regarding the presence of crystalline silica. Dispose in an approved landfill only.

- If the underlayment panel extends under cabinets or wall partitions, it will be necessary to slice through the flooring with a knife as close to the vertical surface as possible. Deeply score the panel. This should allow for removal.
- After each panel has been removed, pull out any nails or fasteners still in the subfloor.
- A chisel is not needed to start the removal of boards after the first board has been removed. Simply work the pry bar under the exposed edge of the next board.
- When removal of the underlayment under the existing floor is complete, thoroughly check the exposed subfloor. Remove any loose areas and reset any "popped" nails or fasteners.
- Vacuum up any residue using the HEPA vacuum cleaner with the metal floor attachment.
- After vacuuming, used HEPA filters and cleaner bags should be removed according to the manufacturer's instructions and placed in a heavy-duty, impermeable, trash bag or leak-tight container with an appropriate label stating, for example "Caution-Contains Asbestos. Avoid Opening or Breaking Container. Breathing Asbestos is Hazardous to Your Health." It may also be appropriate to include in the label a warning regarding the presence of crystalline silica. Close and seal the trash bag or container securely for disposal. Dispose in an approved landfill only.
- Prepare the subfloor by installing new underlayment and or floor covering according to the manufacturer's installation instructions.

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This book replaces all prior editions of the RFCI and Armstrong Recommended Work Practices publications . Future editions of these work practices may be issued to replace this publication .



