Blog



Selective Demolition: Controlled Removal with the Right Tool for the Job

Introduction

Selective demolition is not about tearing everything out. It is about removing the right material, in the right area, while protecting the structure, substrate, or surrounding surface.

Contractors use selective demolition in renovation, restoration, industrial maintenance, asbestos abatement, and controlled removal work. The job may involve removing floor tile, stripping adhesive, taking stucco or plaster off a wall, breaking out coatings, or working in sensitive areas where large machines and heavy breakers are too unwieldy.

What Is Selective Demolition?

Selective demolition focuses on targeted removal rather than full demolition.

Instead of demolishing an entire structure or area, the operator removes specific materials while leaving surrounding surfaces intact. The National Demolition Association describes demolition as a complex set of tasks that can include dismantlement, environmental remediation, salvage, recycling, flooring demolition, and selective structural demolition. It also notes that demolition contractors often recycle, salvage, or reuse materials on projects.
https://www.demolitionassociation.org/Industry-Resources/About-Demolition/Demolition-FAQ
Better tool control helps operators remove materials cleanly, protect the substrate, and reduce unnecessary damage. That can support material recovery and reuse, not just faster removal.

EPA guidance also links deconstruction and selective demolition methods with reuse, recycling, reduced landfill disposal, and improved recovery of construction and demolition materials.
https://www.epa.gov/smm/sustainable-management-construction-and-demolition-materials

Recycling, Environmental Benefits, and the Circular Economy

Selective demolition can support a more circular approach to construction by helping contractors separate materials more carefully and reduce unnecessary waste. Instead of tearing out mixed debris and sending it straight to landfill, controlled removal can make it easier to sort, recycle, salvage, or reuse materials such as tile, masonry, metals, fixtures, and other building components.
This reduces disposal volumes, supports construction and demolition recycling goals, and helps keep useful materials in circulation for longer. MABI lightweight, ergonomic tools fit this approach by giving operators better control during removal, helping protect substrates, reduce breakage, and improve material separation. In practical terms, better control can mean less damage, cleaner waste streams, and more opportunity to recover value from materials that might otherwise be discarded.

Where MABI Fits

MABI tools are well-suited to the many requirements of selective demolition. Their versatility, durability, ergonomics and application-focused range allow operators to work on floors, walls, overhead and in confined spaces.

Across the range, low CFM means reliable, lightweight pneumatic power with portability.

With a high power-to-weight ratio and high blow frequency, MABI tools are a hybrid tool, exceptionally well-suited to controlled demolition and removal work.

The range allows contractors to match the tool to the working position and material

S36V1 Medium: Reach, Scraping, and Removal



The **S36V1 Medium** (https://mabitools.com/portfolios/s36-v1-medium-pneumatic-scraper/) suits reach, scraping, and lighter removal applications.

It gives operators extra access and reach when they need to work away from the body, into awkward areas, or across surfaces where control matters. This makes it a strong fit for stripping, scraping, residue removal, coating removal, and general controlled removal tasks where a compact tool may not provide enough reach.

Typical applications include:

- Wall and surface scraping
- Adhesive and residue removal
- Coating and membrane removal
- Reach work in awkward areas
- Controlled stripping in renovation and abatement environments

The high blow frequency allows control and rapid stripping of materials.

S38V2 Short and Medium: Harder Materials and Demolition-Focused Removal



The **S38V2 Short** (https://mabitools.com/portfolios/s38-v2-short-pneumatic-scraper/) and **S38V2 Medium** provide a more demolition-focused option for tougher materials.

With a longer stroke and higher impact rate, the S38 models suit jobs where the operator needs stronger impact for harder tile, stucco, plaster, mortar, cementitious coatings, buildup, or bonded materials, but still needs the control and reduced weight that selective demolition demands.

The **S38V2 Short** works well in tighter areas where the operator needs maximum control close to the surface. The **S38V2 Medium** adds reach and leverage for walls, surfaces, and removal work where a longer working position helps.

Typical applications include:

- Hard tile removal
- Stucco, plaster, and cementitious coating removal
- Mortar and buildup removal
- Tough adhesive removal
- Controlled breaking and chipping of concrete and hard materials
- Wall and surface demolition tasks

For many selective demolition jobs, the S38V2 offers the balance contractors need: strong impact without resorting to heavier demolition tools.

S55V2 Long: Floor Demolition and Heavy Removal



The **S55V2 Long** (https://mabitools.com/portfolios/s55-v2-long-pneumatic-scraper/) is the floor demolition option in the range.

It suits floor-based removal where the operator needs impact, reach, and a better working position. Floor demolition often forces operators to choose between power and fatigue. Heavy breakers can remove tough material, but their weight and posture demands make all-day work difficult.

The S55V2 Long gives contractors an option for floor work which helps the operator stay more upright and controlled, reducing fatigue and injury risk.

Typical applications include:

- Floor tile removal Mortar bed removal
  Adhesive removal
- Waterproofing and membrane removal
- Floor toppings, levelling compounds, and underlayment removal Heavy floor scraping
- Controlled floor demolition in renovation and abatement work
- Offering the power of 25lb electric breaker at less than half the weight, they are the perfect solution for areas where larger machines can't access

Selective demolition often supports more than removal. It can help contractors protect what still has value.

For salvage, reuse, and material recovery, control helps protect the material being removed and the surface behind it. The more accurate the removal process, the less breakage, while improved material separation makes recycling or reuse more practical.

For renovation and restoration, control also helps protect the substrate. Removing tile, mortar, stucco, plaster, waterproofing, coatings, or adhesive without unnecessary damage reduces subsequent repair work.

This is one of the key advantages of MABI tools. The operator can apply impact where it is needed, rather than using excessive force simply because the tool is too heavy or difficult to control. With reduced fatigue and less injury risk comes a more productive, safer and therefore more cost-effective demolition process.

Asbestos Abatement and ACM Removal

Selective demolition also plays an important role in asbestos abatement and asbestos-containing material removal.

Asbestos remains a current issue in the United States. The EPA states that asbestos was used in a variety of building construction materials, and that fibers may be released when asbestos-containing materials are disturbed during demolition, maintenance, repair, or remodeling.
EPA – Learn About Asbestos (https://www.epa.gov/asbestos/learn-about-asbestos)

The EPA's asbestos NESHAP guidance focuses on work practices that reduce asbestos fiber release during demolition and renovation. EPA also advises that demolition and renovation projects involving asbestos-containing materials require inspection to determine which NESHAP requirements apply.
EPA – Asbestos NESHAP Overview (https://www.epa.gov/asbestos/overview-asbestos-national-emission-standards-hazardous-air-pollutants-neshap)

OSHA's asbestos construction guidance highlights the need for appropriate controls during construction tasks that may disturb asbestos-containing materials, including activities involving roofing, siding, pipes, drilling, and cutting.
OSHA – Asbestos Construction
(https://www.osha.gov/asbestos/construction)

MABI tools do not replace asbestos surveys, containment, wet methods, HEPA controls, trained personnel, or approved abatement procedures. Their benefit when mechanical removal methods are appropriate is to allow operators to remove material in a more targeted way, helping reduce unnecessary breakage, substrate damage, and uncontrolled impact compared with heavier demolition methods.

Why Control Matters in ACM removal

In asbestos abatement, the goal is not aggressive breakout. The goal is controlled removal under the correct procedure.

This can matter when contractors deal with bonded materials, floor tile, sheeting, roofing, siding, mastics, coatings, or residues. OSHA guidance identifies Class II asbestos work as removal of asbestos-containing material that is not thermal system insulation or surfacing material, including materials such as wallboard, floor tile and sheeting, roofing and siding shingles, and construction mastics. OSHA – Asbestos Construction (https://www.osha.gov/asbestos/construction)

For ACM and hazardous-material work, tool control helps the contractor remove only what needs to be removed, in the area that needs to be treated, under the correct containment and work method. Pneumatic tools also avoid electric motors, batteries, and long cable runs, which can be useful in controlled environments and industrial sites. While working in full PPE, a controllable, lightweight, easy-to-handle tool makes the job easier. Being a pneumatic tool, subsequent cleaning and decontamination of equipment can be easier than alternative electric options.

The wider health context is serious. CDC states that asbestos exposure causes most cases of mesothelioma, and EPA links asbestos exposure to lung cancer, mesothelioma, ovarian cancer, laryngeal cancer, and other health problems. EPA also announced a ban on the ongoing use of chrysotile asbestos in March 2024.
CDC – Mesothelioma (https://www.cdc.gov/mesothelioma/index.html)
EPA – EPA Actions to Protect the Public from Asbestos (https://www.epa.gov/asbestos/epa-actions-protect-public-exposure-asbestos)

That makes controlled, compliant removal methods essential.

The right tool for the application

One tool rarely suits every selective demolition task.

Floor work requires extended reach to maintain an ergonomic posture. Wall work needs balance and control. Hard materials need stronger impact. Scraping and residue removal need handling and accuracy.

That is where the MABI range fits well:

S36V1 Medium for reach, scraping, and controlled removal **S38V2 Short and Medium** for harder materials and demolition-focused wall or surface work

S55V2 Long for floor demolition and heavier floor removal

This helps contractors choose the right tool for the position, material, and level of removal required.

Conclusion

Selective demolition demands control, access, and the right level of power. The goal is not outright demolition; it is to remove what needs to come out while protecting what needs to stay.

MABI lightweight pneumatic tools give contractors a focused range for this work. From the S36V1 Medium for reach and scraping, to the S38V2 Short and Medium for harder materials, to the S55V2 Long for floor demolition, the range supports controlled removal across renovation, restoration, abatement, material recovery, and specialty demolition applications.

Bob GRAY
US Business Development Manager

bgray@mabitools.com

+44 (0)7761678936

MABI ERGONOMIC AIR TOOLS