INTRODUCTION

The principal rapporteur was R.L. Zielhuis, Coronel Laboratory, University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands, who acted on behalf of a group of colleagues. The group consisted of the following members: K. Biersteker (physician), C.H.J. Elzenga (engineer), A.R. Kolff van Oosterwijk (engineer), P.B. Meyer (engineer), H.T. Plantcijdt (physician), J. Stumphius (physician), R.L. Zielhuis (physician).

The guidelines only refer to public health, and not to occupational health, plants, animals or materials. Therefore this report only discusses the facts as far as they are relevant for the objective stated.

There has been an enormous output of data on asbestos in the last decennium: technical, experimental and epidemiological. A choice had to be made from those data which appeared relevant for guidelines serving to protect public health. Data on pathogenetic mechanisms, mainly based upon animal experiments, have been largely omitted. Existing epidemiological data mainly refer to occupational health; these have only been reviewed in a general sense, in order to indicate the possibilities of health effects in overexposure (intensity, duration), and to portray the maximum potential hazards from the viewpoints of public health.

At a meeting in Luxembourg November 11 and 12, 1975, an interim report was extensively discussed (see Acknowledgment). In addition workshops were convened to discuss specific points and the conclusions of these have been included in the text.

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