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Applying Brakes Might Also Be Releasing Cancer Agent

SAN DIEGO (UPI) — Every time you hit your brakes, you may be polluting the air with a substance suspected of causing cancer, a pathologist says.

The substance is asbestos, widely used in brake lining. It also is found in roofing, insulation and many other industrial materials.

Dr. W. A. D. Anderson of the University of Miami School of Medicine has found tiny asbestos fibers in the lungs of 31 per cent of the men and 20 per cent of the women in a group of 500 persons studied at random in Miami.

"Surveys in other cities have shown asbestos in the lungs of up to 50 per cent of cross sections of the population," Dr. Anderson said in a report given to a symposium for science writers sponsored by the American Cancer Society.

"An increased incidence of lung cancer among asbestos workers has been noted for years," he said. "The magnitude of asbestos exposure in general urban populations has only been recently documented."

Dr. Anderson said lung cancer, which he called "the major cancer problem in this country," may be caused by many substances. In addition to asbestos, he cited cigaret smoke and automobile exhaust.

"The evidence that cigaret smoke contains a lung cancer-producing factor is overwhelming," he said, "but success so far in changing this exposure factor in the general population cannot be described as overwhelming or even good."