

INTRODUCTION

Asbestosis is a form of pneumoconiosis resulting from prolonged inhalation of asbestos dust. The name asbestos, literally "unburnable," is not that of a specific mineral but is a term applied to a number of different minerals whose characteristic feature is a structure composed of long, parallel, flexible fibers. This structure is unique because the fibers are capable of repeated longitudinal subdivision to units of molecular proportions. In length the fibers vary from a few microns to six or more inches. Some varieties are stiffer than others but many are sufficiently flexible to be spun into yarn and woven on modified textile machinery.

The asbestos minerals are silicates of variable composition and belong to the serpentine and the amphibole groups. Listed below are the more common varieties.

Amphibole Group

Actinolite Anthophyllite

Amosite Crocidolite

Amphibole Tremolite

Serpentine Group

Chrysotile

The bulk of the asbestos of commerce is chrysotile, $3\text{MgO} \cdot 2\text{SiO}_2 \cdot 2\text{H}_2\text{O}$, which is mined on this continent principally in the Thetford region of the Province of Quebec and in Vermont. Crocidolite and amosite also are