

We believe there is a basic distinction between processes using raw asbestos fibers and those using asbestos-containing materials. Whenever loose fiber is used, we exercise great caution to minimize the potential release of fibers to the work place or the ambient environment. The same care is used whenever asbestos materials are handled in such a way that loose fibers could be generated — for example, in cutting asbestos paper or grinding a brake lining.

For many asbestos-containing materials, such as adhesives, brake linings, mastics, and floor tiles, the asbestos is bound in a matrix. This matrix is either flexible -- as in tar-based sound deadeners -- or highly durable, as in concrete asbestos products. In these kinds of materials, asbestos fiber generally is not released during our manufacturing processes unless the material is misused.

In our view this is an important distinction. In considering risk analyses, or in considering regulations and standards, we think it is important to differentiate between applications involving loose fibers and those involving non-friable materials or encapsulated fibers. Such differentiation is not the case today -- and it should be in our opinion.

The techniques and devices used by General Motors are designed to control the release of asbestos fiber.

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Recently, there has been considerable discussion about the use of substitute materials for automotive friction products. While asbestos substitutes are being used in some light duty brake systems, we have not found effective substitutes for many other applications. Various substitutes for asbestos in clutch plates have been investigated, but no suitable alternatives have been found.

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