

FILE NAME: Drywall Spackling Compounds (DWSC)

DATE: 1977 Aug 16

DOC#: DWSC068

DOCUMENT DESCRIPTION: Press Release from CA Dept of Health RE Asbestos

TE OF CALIFORNIA
LTH AND WELFARE AGENCY

DEPARTMENT OF **HEALTH**
714 P STREET, SACRAMENTO, CA. 95814

NUMBER: 318-77
FOR RELEASE: IMMEDIATE

DATE: 8/16/77
CONTACT:

Pete Weisser
(916) 322 2060

Starting this week, warning letters are being mailed to 70,000 California employers believed to be using asbestos, a proven cause of human cancer, alerting them to the September 1 deadline for reporting asbestos workplace use to the State.

Reporting is required by a State law which took effect this year in an effort to prevent job-related cancer.

"Asbestos is the most widely used of the 16 cancer-causing substances now regulated by the State in places of employment," said State Health Director Jerome A. Lackner, M.D. "Employers who fail to report asbestos use by September 1 risk a \$500 fine. While the fine is significant, so is the health hazard to workers of this cancer-causing substance which employers must ensure is safely used."

Dr. Lackner and Donald Vial, director of the State Department of Industrial Relations, both signed these employer alert letters because their departments jointly administer the program to protect California workers against job-related cancer.

"California is the first and only State to so thoroughly regulate the use of asbestos," said Vial, adding:

"Our Cal/OSHA inspectors will be closely watching for unreported and unsafe asbestos use during their routine, unannounced inspections of places of employment.

"Serious safety violations involving asbestos, and any of the other 15 cancer-causing substances under State regulation, can bring private sector employers \$1,000 fines and repeat violation fines of \$5,000. While public employers are exempt from the fines, they are obliged to report asbestos use and to follow safe working practices with asbestos and the other regulated substances."

(more)

Industry sources estimate 135,000 California workers yearly may be exposed to asbestos fibers on their jobs.

A mineral prized for its strength, versatility and fire-resistant qualities, asbestos has some 3,000 commercial uses, including in automotive brake linings and clutches, pipe manufacturing, shipbuilding, fireproofing and construction.

In addition to lung cancer, asbestos fibers are known to cause a rarer form of cancer called mesothelioma, and asbestosis, a lung-scarring disease which impairs lung function. Typically, these diseases are detected only years after prolonged, excessive exposure to asbestos fibers.

Occupations with significant potential exposure to asbestos include shipyard workers, asbestos and insulation workers, pipefitters, construction and demolition workers, and mechanics who work with auto, bus or truck brakes and clutches.

A mailing of about 40,000 letters is going to employers in a variety of industries, and also to utilities and public agencies which are believed on the basis of State industrial classification records to be asbestos users.

These employers must report asbestos use to the State Division of Industrial Safety, 455 Golden Gate Avenue, San Francisco, CA. 94102, giving type of use and the number of employees exposed.

A separate asbestos alert letter is being sent approximately 30,000 employers who operate brake repair shops, garages and auto dealerships, giving them information on the reporting requirement and the health hazards of working with asbestos-lined brakes and clutches. The brake shop letter explains that if the operators are yearly registrants with the State Bureau of Automotive Repair they are automatically registered with the State Division of Industrial Safety, fulfilling their reporting obligation under the new law.

Commented Director Vial:

"The reporting process is uncomplicated. It will provide California with the nation's first major statewide compilation of the many places of employment using asbestos and how many workers may be exposed to it. The registration list will give us a cost-effective data base to help us target inspections in areas of high exposure potential and, thus, better protect California workers against job-related cancer."