FILE NAME: Asbestos Sacks and Bags (ASB)

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INTERNATIONAL PRESS-CUTTING BUREAU

Extract from
Medical News, London

10 MAY 1968

Asbestos stowage makes dockers down tools

A HEALTH scare was touched off by a London docker last week when he discovered that asbestos and cheese cargoes had been stowed next to each other in a ship's hold.

Mr. Jim Botley of Surrey Commercial Docks knew that raw asbestos gave off a dust so dangerous that dockers wore masks to unload it.

When he discovered that dust had leaked out onto the crates of cheese he and the remainder of his gang downed tools. They refused to handle the cheese until they had informed the Port of London health authorities and got masks to work in the ship's hold.

A port health inspector went on board the vessel, the Swedish ship Vretaholm, to examine the load and the complete unloading operation was supervised by a health official the following day.

A port health spokesman commented "The asbestos was separated from the cheese by polythene sheeting but some asbestos fibre had seeped out on to the cheese boxes. It is unlikely that any of the dust would have got through to the cheese which had a thick protective rind around it inside the boxes.

"We followed through the unloading operation and there was no danger of contamination."

● The Ministry of Labour is studying the problem of the menace of asbestosis among industrial workers. Experimental methods of packing imported asbestos in impermeable sacks are now being tried.