

# What You Should Know About Asbestos And Health



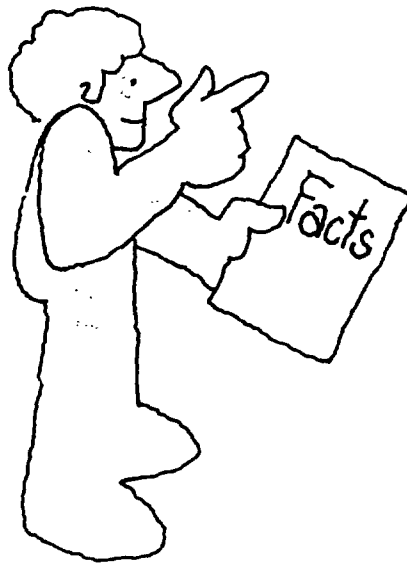
## Frankly Speaking

You certainly are important to your family and loved ones, and you are important to the company. It makes good sense for the company to do everything possible to protect you in your working environment, and for you to take every precaution to avoid possible hazards to your health.

If your work involves the use of asbestos or asbestos-containing products, you should be aware of:

- What the health hazards can be.
- What obligations your employer has to protect you.
- What you can do as an individual to protect your own health, your family, and your fellow employees.

This pamphlet is intended as an aid to your employer's information and training program. Your employer is required to make available to you without cost a copy of the appropriate asbestos standard and its appendices.



## These are the Facts

Exposure to asbestos fiber can increase risk of developing certain diseases over a period of years. The four diseases associated with inhalation of asbestos fiber are: asbestosis - a non-malignant scarring lung condition; cancer of the lung, and to less certain degree, cancer of the digestive tract; and mesothelioma -- a rare cancer of the lining of the chest or abdominal cavities.

Reduction of asbestos dust exposure is at present the only known method of preventing disease among asbestos exposed workers. Experience has shown that when dust levels are low, the risk to the worker and the incidence of asbestos-related disease is low.

## Now . . . About Smoking

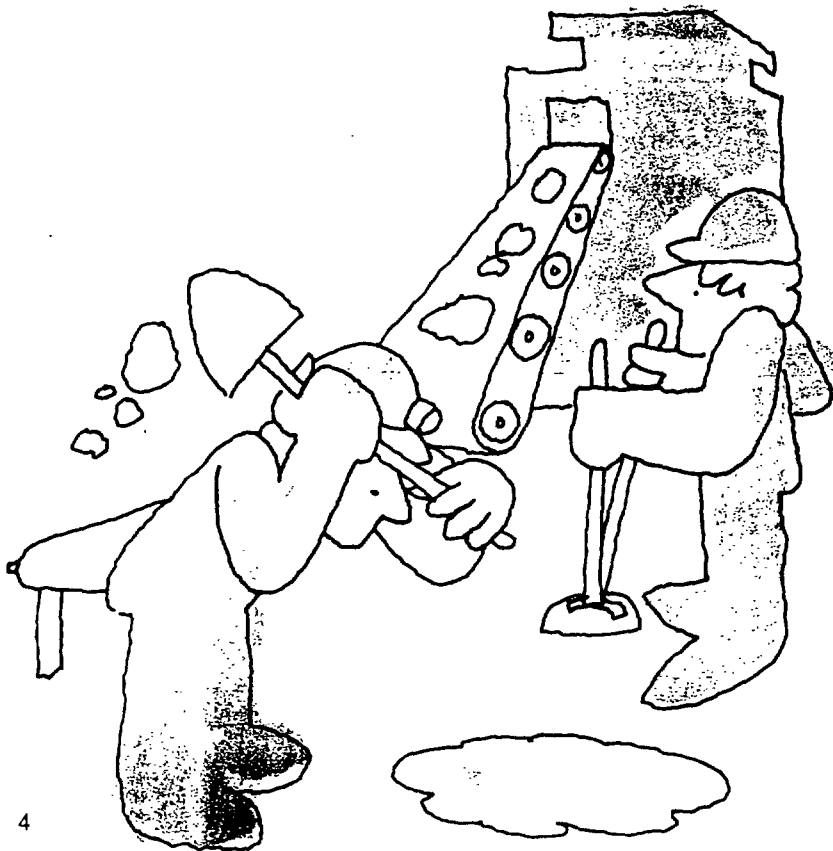
It has been established that cigarette smoking greatly increases the risk of developing lung cancer in persons exposed to asbestos. Some risk may also be present in nonsmoking asbestos exposed workers.



## If You Work in a Plant or Mine

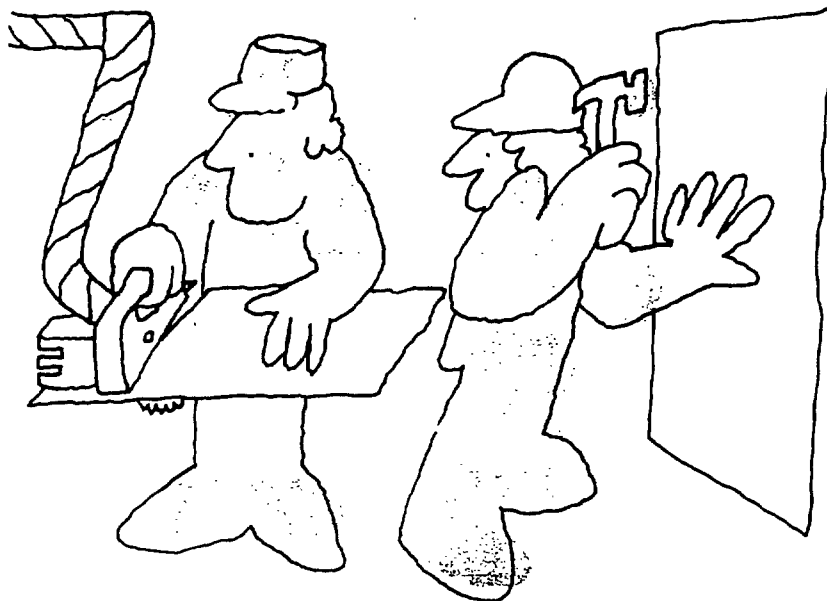
Employees in asbestos mines, mills or product manufacturing plants will be exposed to airborne asbestos fiber. But, when dust levels in mines, mills and factories are properly controlled, the asbestos content of the air will be low and the hazard to workers will thereby be greatly reduced.

Always follow good housekeeping procedures and keep surfaces as free as practicable of dust and waste containing asbestos.



## If You Work in Field Operations

In currently marketed asbestos products, the asbestos fibers are "locked in" or "encapsulated" in the product by means of cement, plastic or other binders. Consequently, the fibers are not easily released into the air, except during cutting or certain other machining operations. Proper work practices during installation requiring such cutting or machining operations assures very low dust levels. The tear-out, removal or demolition of old asbestos-containing insulations also can release fibers. Such operations must be carefully carried out with approved methods of dust suppression and control and workers must be provided with respiratory protection devices approved by NIOSH.



## Regulations to Protect You

To protect your health, standards for worker exposure to asbestos dust have been established by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) of the U.S. Department of Labor. These standards are designed to protect you from exposure to potentially hazardous amounts of asbestos dust and are being carefully observed by the company.

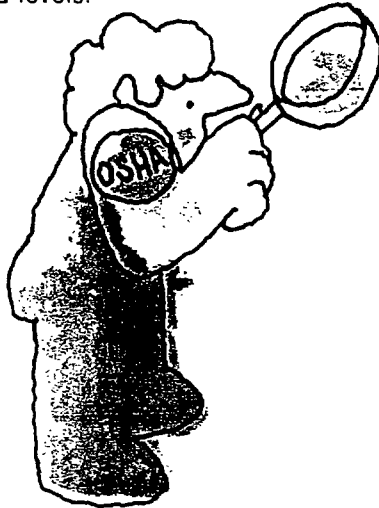
Here is what these standards provide:

### 1 A SAFE WORKPLACE

Your employer is required to make sure that no employee is exposed to more asbestos dust than permitted by the OSHA standard. Your company will exert every effort to keep levels not only below permissible limits, but as low as possible. Average exposures over eight hours must be below 0.2 fibers per cubic centimeter.

### 2 IN CASE OF RISK

If the permissible exposure limit is exceeded in an area, affected employees will be notified by their employer, and will be informed of the corrective measures being undertaken to reduce their exposure to permitted levels.



## **CORRECTIVE ACTION**

Engineering controls, safe work practices, and in some cases, respirators are the approved methods of correction.

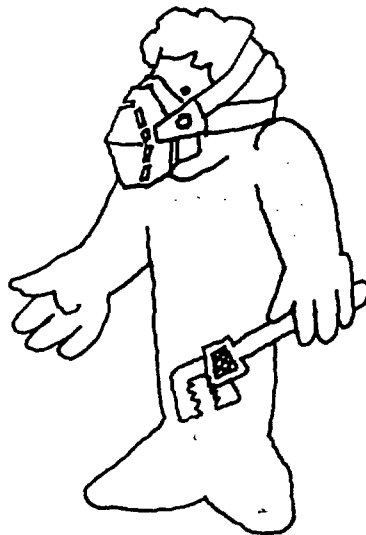
## **IN THE MEANTIME**

While corrective measures are being taken, affected employees will be protected. Protection may involve the wearing of an approved respirator provided by their employer.

## **ABOUT RESPIRATORS**

The use of respirators to achieve employee protection are permitted: a) during the time necessary to install feasible engineering controls and to institute safe work practices; b) in work operations such as maintenance and repair activities; c) in work situations where feasible engineering and work practice controls are not yet sufficient to reduce exposure to or below the permissible exposure limit; and, d) in emergencies.

Where respiratory protection is required, your employer is required to have a respirator program.



### **ONLY IF YOU PASS THE MEDICAL**

No employee shall be assigned to a task requiring the use of a respirator if, based on his or her most recent examination, an examining physician determines that the employee will be unable to function normally wearing a respirator, or that the safety or health of the employee or other employees will be impaired by the use of the respirator.

### **AND ONLY IF YOU ARE PROPERLY FITTED**

Your employer is required to ensure that the respirators issued to all employees are fitted properly and allow the least possible facepiece leakage.

### **OTHER SPECIAL PROTECTIVE ITEMS**

Protective clothing, change rooms, separate clothes lockers, showers, and lunchrooms will be provided for employees assigned to areas where the permissible exposure limit is exceeded.



## **9 CHECKING THE AIR**

Monitoring of the workplace air is conducted at least every 6 months by the employer to assure government standards are being met. Employees may review the air monitoring results from their jobs areas. In cases when it is reasonably expected that employees will not be exposed to airborne asbestos dust at or above minimum OSHA standards, the employer is not required to continue monitoring the air.

Employees or their designated representatives may observe any monitoring of the workplace or work operation.

## **10 REGULATED AREAS**

Regulated areas are established in the workplace where airborne asbestos dust exceeds the permissible exposure level. Around the perimeter of the regulated area, warning signs will be clearly displayed. In addition, warning signs shall be posted at all approaches to regulated areas so that employees may read the signs and take necessary protective steps before entering. Employees should obey these signs at all times.

### **REGULATED AREAS RESTRICTIONS**

Only authorized employees who have been supplied with an appropriate respirator may enter regulated areas. Employees may not eat, drink, smoke, chew tobacco or gum, or apply cosmetics in regulated areas.

## **12 WARNING LABELS ON PRODUCTS, TOO**

Warning labels are to be affixed to all raw materials, mixtures, scrap, waste, debris, and other products containing asbestos, except ones that have the fibers modified by a bonding, coating or binding agent and the product manufacturer can demonstrate that in the product's foreseeable use and handling, no airborne asbestos exposures above the minimum OSHA action level of 0.1 fibers per cubic centimeter will result.

## **13 MEDICAL EXAMS**

The employer, at no cost, must provide an annual medical examination for employees exposed to asbestos fibers at levels above minimum OSHA standards. Pre-employment and termination medical examinations are also to be provided.

## **14 COUNSELING AND RESULTS AVAILABLE**

Written results of an employee's medical examination shall be provided to him or her and on request, the employee's medical records will be made available to anyone having your written consent.



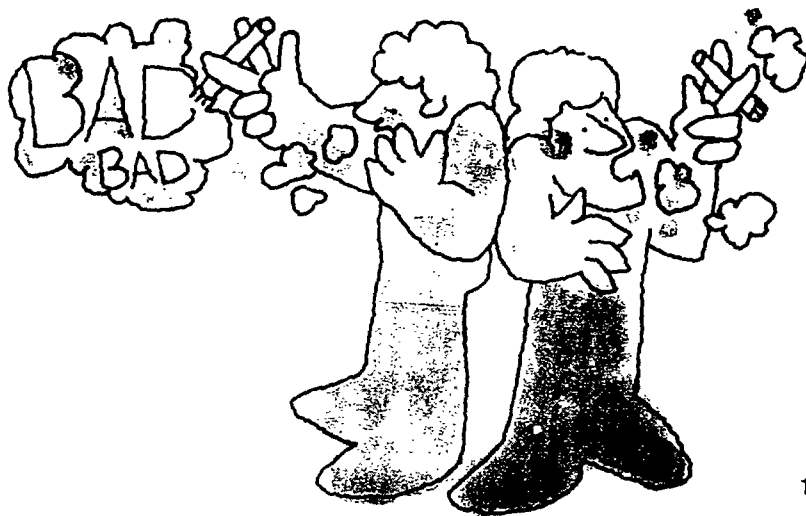
## And, Most Important

On the advice of the U.S. Surgeon General and many other medical specialists: If you work with asbestos and you do smoke cigarettes, quit smoking! If you work with asbestos and do not smoke, don't start!

Your family and your employer need you and your special abilities. Guard your health in everyway, but particularly where cigarette smoking is concerned.

If you don't smoke cigarettes now and never have smoked them regularly, don't start. If you do smoke now, stop.

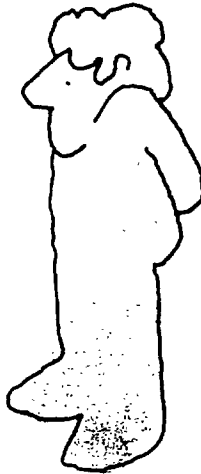
Remember, however, cigarette smoking in your workplace's regulated areas is not allowed at all.



## When Leaving Work

You should follow all precautions to prevent your taking asbestos home on any work clothes or other materials, in order to protect members of your family from possible exposure to asbestos dust.

Protective work clothings, change rooms and showers may be provided by your employer to reduce the possibility of carrying asbestos fibers home on your person. Place your protective clothing for laundering in the proper container. Do not remove protective clothing from the change room.



## What Else Can You Do?

Industrial safety and health can never be the responsibility of only one person. Both you and your employer must work together to provide a safe and healthy environment.

For safety in certain areas, detailed work practices must be instituted to make sure we are complying with government regulations. As an employee, it is your duty to follow these work practices at all times. Never take shortcuts that may endanger your health and that of others.

Specifically,

1. Do not use high-speed abrasive disc saws that are not equipped with appropriate engineering controls.
2. Do not use compressed air for removal of asbestos unless an enclosed ventilation system is installed to capture the dust cloud.

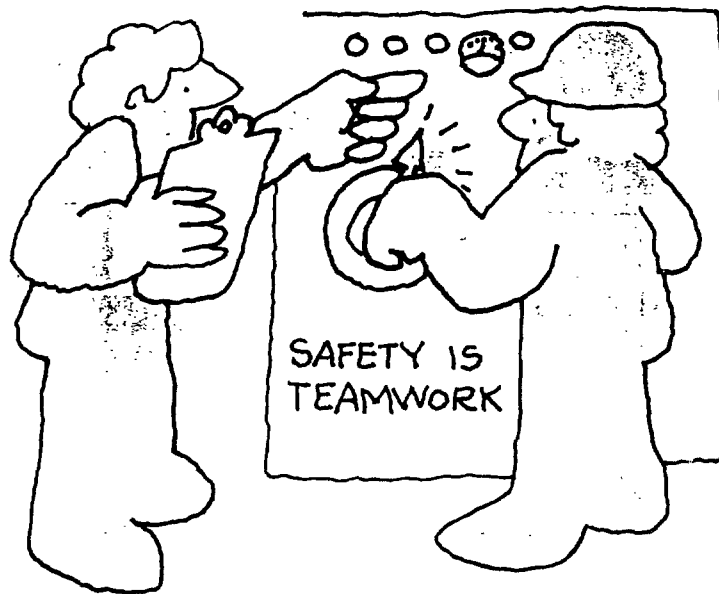
If you see a possible hazard that your employer may have overlooked, bring it to your supervisor's attention.

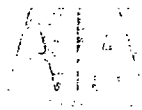
If you can suggest more efficient and safer work practices, do so. If you are not sure how to handle a material or perform an operation without creating dust, talk with your supervisor first.

# REMEMBER

- Asbestos fiber can be hazardous to your health, and exposure to it, over a period of time, can increase your risk of developing asbestosis, cancer of the lung or mesothelioma. Other forms of cancer, such as gastrointestinal may be associated with asbestos exposure but the association is not as clear-cut as it is with lung cancer.
- Every precaution should be taken by you and your employer to keep dust levels low and to avoid unnecessary exposure.
- The asbestos industry is working hard to control dust exposure and to alert every worker to proper safety precautions. Government and company regulations designed to protect you and your workers against exposure to asbestos dust should be strictly followed by everyone.
- Currently marketed asbestos products are not hazardous when properly handled or used, but workers who are engaged in their manufacture, fabrication or installation should be aware of possible dangers. Don't be careless - - urge your fellow workers not to be.

■ Asbestos is used in many valuable products daily throughout the world... products that carry drinking water... products that stop our cars and trucks... products that save fuel and energy in this important time of conservation. If we are to continue making these much-needed products, it is important that you and your employer cooperate in maintaining the highest standards of safety and health on the job.





**ASBESTOS INFORMATION ASSOCIATION**  
1745 Jefferson Davis Highway  
Arlington, Virginia 22202