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Asbestos Suspected Lung Cancer Cause

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NEW YORK (AP) — Medical specialists pointed a strong finger of suspicion today at asbestos as a cause not only of lung cancer but also of another extremely rare form of fatal human cancer.

This cancer, known as mesothelioma, involves the lining of the abdominal and chest cavities.

Much of the specialists' evidence comes from autopsy studies of men working with asbestos as an insulation material.

They said it also is possible that dust from products containing asbestos might subject people generally to some risk of cancers. How much risk there might be, they said, they could not tell.

Asbestos is used not only for insulation but as a flooring material, in automobile brake shoes, and in many other applications. Ordinary wear and tear, they said, might release dust into the atmosphere.

The report was presented to the American Public Health Association by Drs. Irving J. Selikoff and Jacob Churg of the Mount Sinai Hospital, New

York, and E. Cuyler Hammond, Sc.D., director of statistical research for the American Cancer Society. Dr. Hammond is known for his studies of cigarette smoking in relationship to lung cancer.

Asbestos is a mineral, magnesium silicate, and about 3½ million tons of it are used worldwide each year, they said. In 1935, worldwide usage amounted to about 500 tons, the researchers said.

Tiny, hard particles of asbestos can lodge in the lungs during mining, processing and applica-

tion of asbestos-containing materials, or possibly from dust raised through normal wear, they said.

"We had previously found that lung cancer and possibly gastrointestinal cancer were markedly increased in incidence among asbestos insulation workers," they said.

Now they also find a markedly high increase among such workers of mesothelioma, a cancer so rare it is not classed separately as a cause of death in the international classification of diseases.