Asbestos Predicted Killer of Million

Gannett News Service

WASHINGTON (AP) — A doctor has predicted that one million Americans will die by the year 2000 from diseases caused by asbestos fibers.

Dr. Irving Selikoff of the Mt. Sinai School of Medicine in New York said the victims will be persons who are or have been working regularly with the fibrous mineral.

"All will die within the next 30 to 35 years," he told the Senate Commerce environmental subcommittee Friday.

Selikoff said asbestos is a "hidden time bomb," causing cancer that may not be detected for 20, 30 or even 40 years.

Of the one million workers who already have been exposed, he said 200,000 will die of lung cancer, 70,000 of asbestosis, or lung scarring, and 150,000 of various cancers. The rest will die of other ailments, Selikoff said.

He added that millions of other persons are exposed to asbestos fibers to an unknown degree every day of their lives, without their knowledge.

The subcommittee was told that more than 3,000 consumer products and a host of building materials contain asbestos, which accumulates in the human lungs.

He said other common sources are in the talc used in polished rice and balloons to keep them from sticking together, and papier-mache used in school art classes.

The Food and Drug Administration last year issued regulations banning the use of asbestos in garments, and has proposed a ban on asbestos-laden talc in food and food packaging.

Selikoff and other witnesses expressed support for a toxic-substances control bill.

Albert J. Fritsch, a director of the nonprofit Center for Science in the Public Interest, told the subcommittee:

"We need a bill to cover all phases of asbestos use and we need pretesting, health research, labeling and environmental controls."

Binghamton Press

Feb 1973

HWBUI0004870