

Asbestos Danger Is Cited In Spackling Dry Walls

BY WALL STREET JOURNAL Staff Reporter
WASHINGTON — Materials used to seal seams in dry-wall construction may expose workers to harmful levels of asbestos fibers, federal officials warned.

The Labor Department said that spackling and taping compounds often used to cover joints contain asbestos and that workers sanding joints smooth before painting may expose themselves to unsafe levels of asbestos fibers in the air.

Taping compounds are spread over paper tape at joints of interior wall sections, are allowed to dry and are sanded before the surfaces are painted. Spackling compounds are a plaster-like material used to fill holes and joints.

The department's Occupational Safety and Health Administration said employer groups and unions are being asked to alert workers to the potential hazard. The warning followed an examination of 17 members of a New York City painters union local. The examination showed the lungs of nine painters had X-ray evidence of fibrosis, or excessive secretion build-up in the lungs.

Asbestos fibers are easily inhaled. Once in the lungs, the fibers are coated with a secretion that in sufficient amounts can seriously impair lung capacity. Asbestos exposure can also cause lung cancer.

Cancer Cause In the Air?

CINCINNATI (UPI) — Dr. Albert Sabin, who developed the oral polio vaccine, said yesterday that "55 to 90 percent" of cancer cases might be prevented by making "environmental changes."

"Environmental factors are of the greatest importance" in cancer, said Sabin, who has been doing cancer research the past 13 years. "Our way of life needs to be carefully studied."

"If we cut out cigaret smoking we could cut lung cancer dramatically. Smoking definitely causes cancer."

Sabin, addressing a research society here, said the use of certain chemicals in the dye industry and the industrial use of asbestos should be further studied for their effect on cancer.

A cure for cancer is still a long way off, Sabin added.

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Asbestos price to be increased an average of 10% as of April 1

By NICHOLAS COTTER
Leading Canadian asbestos producers will raise asbestos fibre prices by an average of 10 per cent, effective April 1.

The action, initiated by Asbestos Corp. Ltd. of Montreal, follows general fibre price increases ranging from 8 to 16 per cent that became effective Jan. 1. Asbestos Corp. is Canada's second largest asbestos producer.

Canadian Johns-Manville Co. Ltd. of Asbestos, Que., the biggest Canadian producer, followed the Asbestos Corp. lead. Other producers are expected to match the new 10 per cent average increase for all asbestos grades.

In dollar terms, the asbestos fibre increases of up to 25 per cent so far this year are expected to add substantially to the annual value of shipments by the domestic industry.

Canada is the world's largest asbestos fibre exporter. About 95 per cent of Canadian-produced shipments of 1,862,963 short tons in 1974 were exported to 70 countries, the main markets being the United States, Western Europe and Japan.

Shipments last year were up by 10 per cent over 1972 and are estimated to have been worth \$250-million. About 82 per cent of Canadian asbestos output comes from mines in Quebec; their shipments in 1973 totalled 1,521,839 tons valued at an estimated \$185-million.

For an industry that traditionally has held price increases to an annual average of 4 per cent or less, the two sharp upward moves in asbestos fibre quotations so far in 1974 are unprecedented.

Between 1965 and 1973, fibre prices rose by a cumulative 21 per cent, according to the Quebec Asbestos Mining Association.

Current fibre prices are a record. Because of the broad range of asbestos fibre grades—more than 12—prices can range from about \$120 a ton to \$1,500 a ton for high quality fibre.

Asbestos prices were forced to respond to inflationary pressures, according to A. S. Johnson, vice-president of sales for Asbestos Corp. He added that Canadian dollar devaluations in terms of a number of foreign currencies in 1973 diminished the real return to domestic asbestos exporters.

Cost increases have been general, J. G. Berry, general

manager of Cassiar Asbestos Corp. Ltd. of Toronto, said. The company has asbestos mines in Northern British Columbia and the Yukon produce about 200,000 tons of fibre annually worth between \$40-million and \$50-million.

Mr. Berry said Cassiar is studying closely the price moves by Asbestos Corp. and Canadian Johns-Manville.

Bell Asbestos Mines Ltd. of Thetford Mines, Que., is also reviewing its fibre price structure in the light of moves by the two industry leaders.

"Rising costs for all of our materials are a concern," W. J. Smith, vice-president of sales, commented. "We're going to study the price moves carefully."

Sirs:

As a jewelry craftsman, I have been using asbestos, as do most craftsmen who use a blowtorch in their work. It has been recent and vividly brought to my attention that this material, which we casually use in soldering, fusing, etc., is an extreme health hazard the effects of which can show up many years after exposure. A doctor friend, who specializes in pulmonary medicine, is utterly dismayed that artists still use asbestos and the dangers related to its handling and particle inhalation. I strongly urge that you, as other manufacturers, discontinue the use of asbestos and having good ventilation arrangements installed in your shops.

WILLIAM RAYNES

Weymouth, Massachusetts

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