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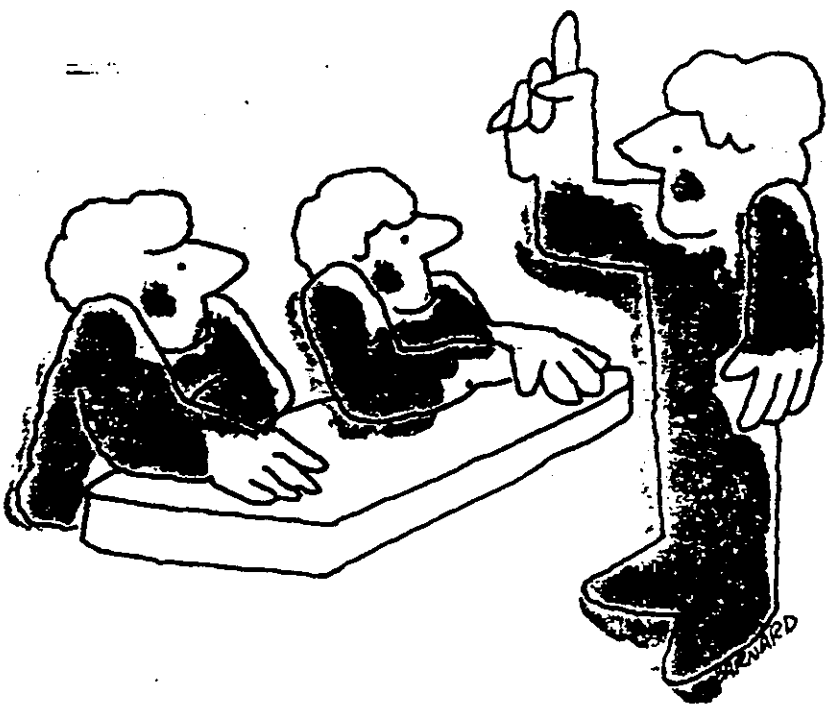
What You Should Know About Asbestos And Health



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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 and that of your fellow employees.

These are the Facts

Exposure to asbestos fiber can increase the 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 a lesser degree, cancer of the digestive tract; and mesothelioma — a rare cancer of the lining of the chest or abdominal cavities.

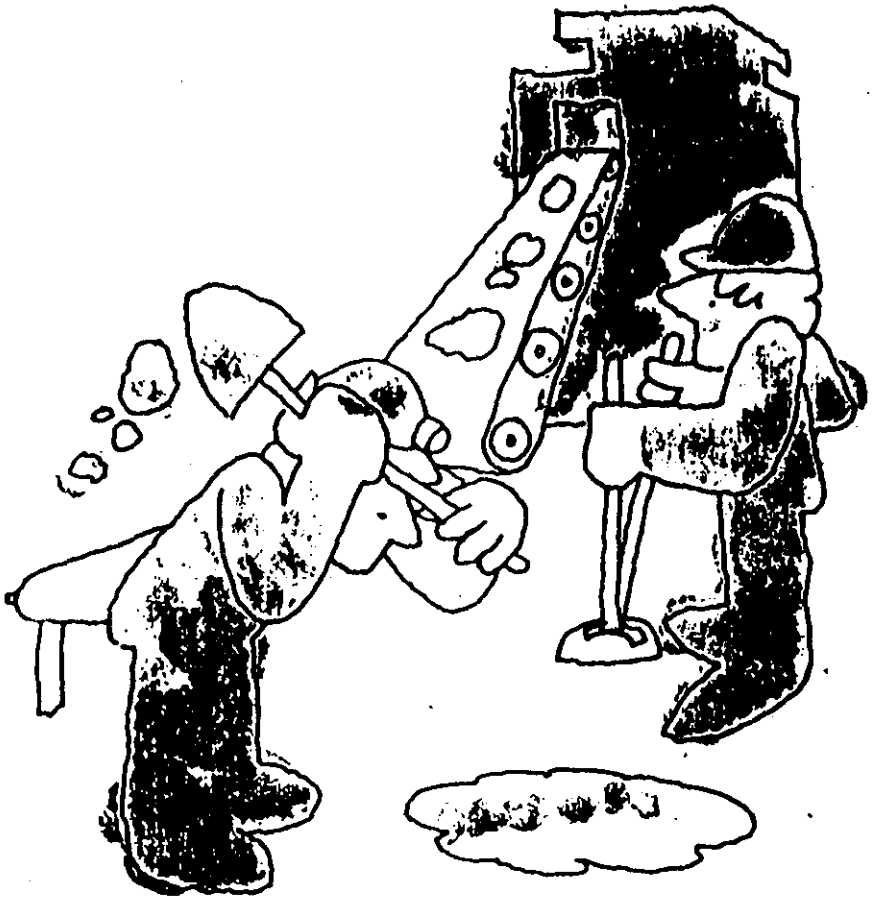
Reduction of asbestos dust exposure is at present the only known method of preventing disease among asbestos industry workers. Experience has shown that when dust levels are low, the risk to the worker and the incidence of asbestos-related disease is low.

Now . . . About Smoking

It has been established that cigarette smoking **greatly** increases the risk of developing lung cancer in persons exposed to asbestos. On the other hand, asbestos industry workers who do not smoke cigarettes — and who never have smoked regularly — have shown no greater frequency of lung cancer than the average person who does not smoke.

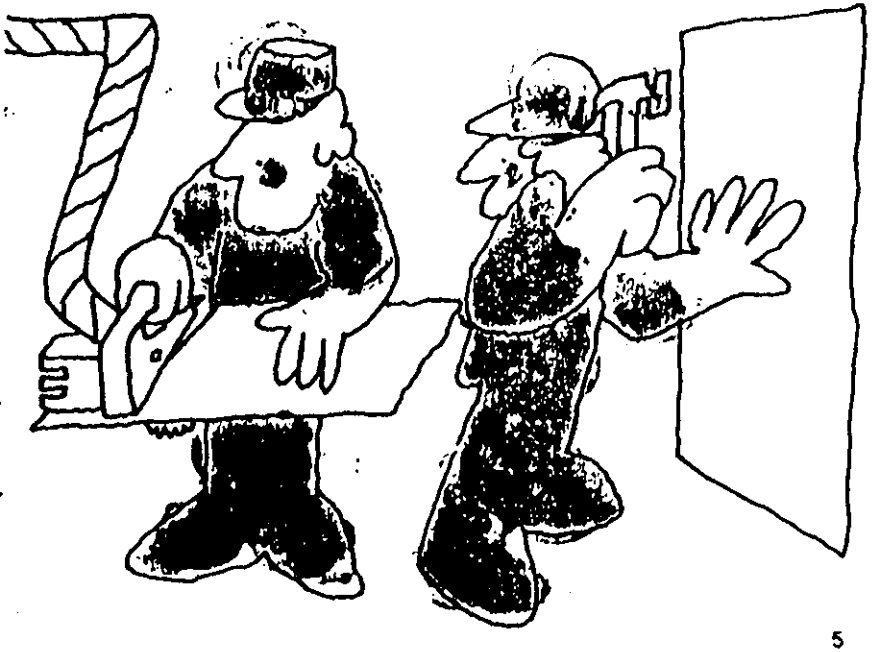
If You Work in a Plant or Mine

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 within safe levels, and will not be a hazard to workers.



If You Work in Field Operations

Most finished asbestos-containing products, when correctly used, will not produce dust levels high enough to be a hazard to workers. In more than 90% of the asbestos-containing products made in the United States, the asbestos fibers are "locked in" the product by means of cement, plastic or other binders. Consequently, the fibers are not easily released into the air, except during sawing or certain other machining operations. The tear-out, removal or demolition of old asbestos-containing insulations also can release fibers. Such operations must be carried out with approved methods of dust suppression and control.



Regulations to Protect You

To insure the safety of all, occupational standards for 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

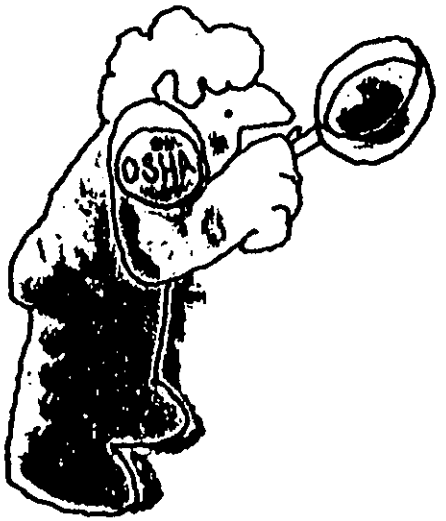
Your employer is required to make sure that no employee is exposed to more asbestos dust than permitted by the government standard. Your company will exert every effort to keep levels not only below permissible limits, but as low as possible.

2 IN CASE OF RISK

If exposure limits are exceeded, the employee will be notified by his employer, and will be informed of the corrective measures being undertaken to reduce his exposure to permitted levels.

3 CORRECTIVE ACTION

Engineering controls and safe work practices will be the approved methods of correction.



4 IN THE MEANTIME

While corrective measures are being taken, the employee will be protected by other means, which may include the wearing of an approved respirator provided by his employer, or by shift rotation.

5 TEMPORARY MEASURES

The use of respirators or shift rotation to achieve proper dust control will be permitted only (a) during the time necessary to install engineering controls or to institute safe work practices, (b) in situations where such controls or practices are not technically feasible, or (c) in emergencies.

6 AND ONLY IF YOU PASS THE MEDICAL

No employee will be assigned to a task requiring the use of a respirator if his most recent yearly medical examination indicates that he would not be able to function properly while wearing one, or if the wearing of the respirator would create a hazard to the employee's health or safety.

7 SPECIAL PROTECTION WHEN NEEDED

Protective clothing, change rooms, and separate clothes lockers will be provided for employees in situations where exposure standards are exceeded.

8 CHECKING THE AIR

Monitoring of workplace air will be conducted by the employer to assure that government standards are being met. Employees may review results of the monitoring in their particular job areas.

9 SIGNS TO GUIDE YOU

Caution signs will be posted in work areas where airborne levels of asbestos may be in excess of the exposure limits, and where respiratory protection and special handling precautions are required. Employees should obey these signs at all times.

10 CAUTIONS ON PRODUCTS, TOO

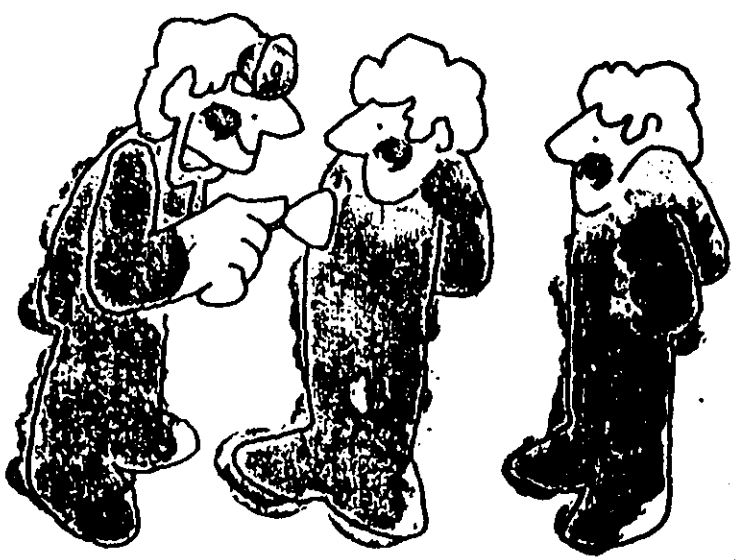
Caution labels will be placed on asbestos-containing products which, during any reasonably foreseeable use, handling, application, machining or disposal may release asbestos fiber into the air in concentrations that exceed the exposure limits.

11 ANNUAL CHECK-UPS

The employer, at no cost to the employee, will provide yearly medical examinations for employees exposed to asbestos dust. Pre-employment and termination medical exams also are provided.

12 COUNSELING AND RESULTS AVAILABLE

Results of each employee's medical examination will be reviewed with him by a physician, and, at the worker's request, his own medical exam records will be made available to his family physician.



And, Most Important . . .

Another word about smoking. First, an assurance. If you don't smoke cigarettes now and never have smoked them regularly, statistical studies show you have no greater chance of getting lung cancer than a nonsmoker who has never worked with asbestos.

But, on the advice of 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!**

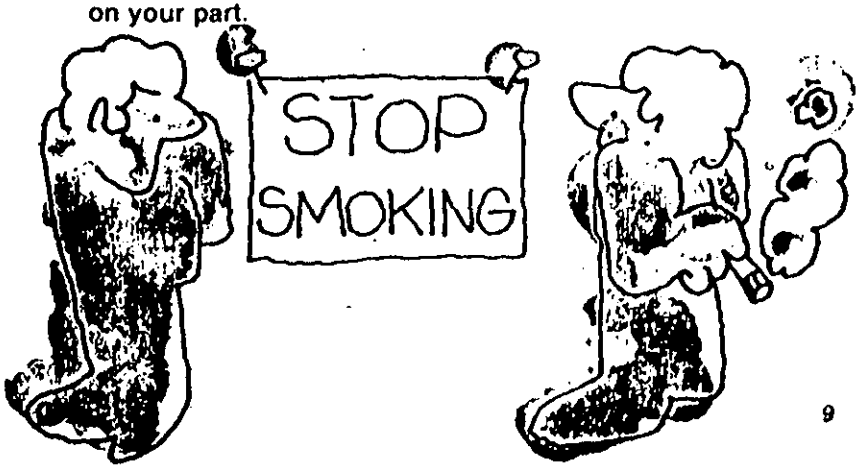
Your family and the company need you and your special abilities. Guard your health in every way, but particularly where cigarette smoking is concerned.

After You Leave Work

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

To reduce the possibility of carrying asbestos fibers home on your person and clothing, facilities for showering and changing from work to regular clothes may be provided by your employer. Work clothing taken home for laundering should be carried in a closed bag or container and then washed separately from other family clothing.

Never take loose fiber home. Your family should not be needlessly exposed to asbestos dust through any carelessness on your part.



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 specialized 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.

- If you see a possible hazard that your employer may have overlooked, bring it to his 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 may be hazardous to your health, and exposure to it, over a period of time, may increase your risk of developing asbestosis, cancer of the lung or digestive tract, or mesothelioma.

- 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 other workers against exposure to asbestos dust should be strictly followed by everyone.

- The vast majority of the thousands of finished 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 some 3,000 products daily throughout the world . . . products that help prevent and control fire in our homes, schools, factories, offices, hospitals and theaters . . . products that help 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.

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