

CONTROL OF THE USE OF ASBESTOS-CONTAINING FRICTION MATERIALS*

M. L. BENTLEY

Mintex, Cleckheaton, Yorks

INTRODUCTION

THIS paper outlines the measures taken by the asbestos-using industry to find out the nature and causes of asbestosis, and the work it has carried out on environmental control. Particular reference is made to dust created during the manufacture and subsequent handling and machining operations of friction materials containing asbestos.

It is rather less than 40 years ago that the need for control of asbestos dust in large quantities was first recognised and the Government Regulations which became law in 1933 have resulted in a considerable improvement in the health record of people employed in asbestos factories.

In the 1950's, however, it became apparent that although the improvement had been dramatic, cases of asbestosis were occurring in people who had joined the industry since the dust control measures were introduced and it was also apparent that certain users of asbestos products, such as thermal insulation engineers or ladders were also being affected.

As a result of this the three leading Companies in the asbestos industry, B.B.A. Group, Cape Asbestos and Turner & Newall, decided that further investigation into the nature and causes of asbestosis was necessary and they financed and set up the Asbestosis Research Council with this objective. Since then the Asbestosis Research Council (ARC) has continuously sponsored research at Cambridge, Reading and other centres and has co-ordinated the work of its own research, medical and engineering teams concerned with this problem.

Much of the increased awareness of health problems connected with asbestos stems from these research projects and the industry's own experts are acknowledged, and have been consulted regularly, by Government Departments and other organisations both in this country and overseas. The ARC has drawn up some Codes of Practice on the handling of asbestos in those areas where the control of asbestos dust was thought advisable at that time. The ARC has also played an active part in the formulation of the new Asbestos Regulations which are expected to become law in about 12 months.

Because of its considerable experience in using asbestos and asbestos products itself and its concern that these products should be used without risk, it set up an additional committee last year with the principal object of intensifying the study of problems arising in the working environment, dealing with those areas where it had only

*This paper was originally presented at a Conference on Exposure to Asbestos during Brake and Clutch Maintenance held at Brentwood, Essex, March 1969