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Deadly dust-particles from asbestos brakes

By Lucy Komisar
Staff Writer

Mechanic Dave Fernicola walks over to a car that slants forward from the jack set under its rear end and bends to touch the exposed metal wheel.

He holds out a finger covered with a charcoal-colored film. "Asbestos dust," he said.

To remove the dust, Fernicola, 28, who works at Circle Brake Service in Hackensack, wipes the brake drums with a dry rag and then tosses the rag into an open barrel.

Like most mechanics, Fernicola ignores recommended procedures, a failing that can lead to cancer or asbestosis, a chronic lung disease caused by inhaling microscopic asbestos fibers. Anyone in the garage is subject to the same hazards.

A recent survey of garages in New Jersey and New York revealed routine disregard of these basic safety procedures. Workers interviewed were all aware of the hazards; they simply ig-

nored them or took ineffective precautions.

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, a federal research agency, says asbestos dust should be vacuumed, not blown, from brake drums and floors. It rejects dry sweeping and cleaning under any circumstances. If ventilation at the source of the dust is inadequate, workers should wear filter masks, the agency said, to protect themselves from the dust.

Asbestos is used in brake linings because it is resistant to the heat caused when the lining presses against the rotating wheel.

Car repair workers can't avoid working with asbestos, but there are ways they can protect themselves, such as using masks or vacuums.

An industrial vacuum costs \$250, but workers can also use shop vacuums that sell for \$29 to \$129.

Fernicola, who lives in Paterson, said, "I've been wearing a mask for about four years since I took a biology course at [William] Paterson College,

and we started getting heavy into dangers from cancer."

He said he tried to talk his coworkers into wearing the masks which the company provides, but they ignored him.

"It's uncomfortable," said 33-year-old Tim Walsh of Dumont. He said he removes the dust by brushing it or blowing it with an air hose, both extremely dangerous procedures.

Michael Maresca, 18, of Ridgefield Park also rejects the mask. "I don't believe in it, if you're going to die, you're going to die," he said.

"Real problem"

Circle Brake Manager Tom Colella said he can't make the men wear the masks. "It's a real problem. I don't know what to do myself," he said.

John Weller, a mechanic at the Exxon Service Center in Oradell, described similar hazards. "A lot of people blast [the dust] with an air gun, let it spray all over the room, and that's the way

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The magazine said Miss Hearst, 24, planned to marry Bernard Shaw, 30, identified as a San Francisco policeman who "moonlighted as a private bodyguard for the newspaper heiress while she was free on bond for 18 months."

Miss Hearst returned to a minimum-security prison at Pleasanton, Calif., on May 15 after she failed in court appeals to have the guilty verdict overturned. In March, the federal Supreme Court refused to review her conviction.

Newsweek said Shaw, who is divorced, declined to comment on the report.

The magazine quoted an unidentified source as saying the wedding could occur before she leaves prison. She will be eligible for parole in a year.

Miss Hearst was kidnapped on Feb. 4, 1974, from her Berkeley apartment. She later joined her captors, the Symbionese Liber-



Patricia Hearst

ation Army, and participated with SLA members in the April 1974 bank holdup for which she was convicted.

Rev. King in Hungary

The Rev. Martin Luther King Sr., father of the slain civil rights leader, preached to a Baptist congregation in Budapest yesterday about "bringing back lost sheep to the fold."

On a week's visit here at the invitation of



Rev. Martin Luther King

the Ecumenical Council churches, King urged his "seek lost sheep in the wild are found, and then bring Friday, the Calvinist T my of Debrecen, East H an honorary degree on Ki its in preaching for "peace ties among all races and From Budapest, King where he will attend the

Take note /

Here's a new and different method of treatment for migraine headache. As you know, I follow all the research information on health, and I come across all kinds of new medications and treatments for illnesses. Recently, a friend of mine told me how he got rid of his migraines. His method is just a little unorthodox, but it gave him relief.

headaches, and I have them at work. They're really bugging me now, and . . ." Before he could finish, the doctor stopped him and said, "I don't want to hear this!"

Suddenly my friend got furious. He went in to a rage. He told the doctor off. He told him what he thought of him. HE BLEW HIS TOP! HIS ANGER SPEWED FORTH! ENRAGED,

tween 2 and 5 a.m. That punch.

The older a woman gets, her chances of producing wouldn't worry.

This is supposed to be of the year. February is

Most of us can hear better ear than with our left. I CAN HEAR BETTER EAR THAN OUR LEFT

Some used-car dealers beauties with a scent of L'Auto New.

Women who are beautiful young are not as happy as

Deadly dust from brake linings

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they do it here. When that happens, I step out of the shop."

However Waller does not follow recommended procedures himself. "I lightly brush off the backing plates, and the dust falls down onto the ground," he said. He said he knows it is safer to clean off brake dust by wetting it first, but adds, "I can't be wasting my time. 'Nobody wears a mask here,' he said. 'I would wear a mask if it were supplied to me, but I'm not about to go out and buy one.'"

The masks cost less than \$2 each. Workers in government garages pay more attention to the asbestos danger, but even they do not always follow prescribed safety practices.

William Galdi, who heads the Bergen County Department of Motor Vehicles, said, "We wash the dust with gasoline or a cleaning solution. It comes down into a drain pan rather than get blown into the air."

Where to call for information

The federal Office of Cancer Communications says workers exposed to asbestos should not smoke and should get regular chest X-rays. A toll-free cancer information service number, (800) 523-3586, has been established to answer questions from the public.

However William Nicholson, associate director of the Environmental Sciences Laboratory at Mount Sinai Medical School in New York, said that process is not recommended:

"Exposure to gasoline fumes is not good for you either. They should use water. Just a damp rag will take the dust out. You don't want to use solvents. You're not trying to clean up oil; you're trying to clean up dust."

In Passaic County, road department Supervisor Alex Komar said brake workers use vacuums to draw out asbestos particles. However they do not wear masks or wet down the dust.

Even when vacuums are supplied, government workers sometimes fail to use them. Adam Caruso, master mechanic at the state police repair shop in Trenton, said:

"The men are supposed to vacuum the dust off, but a lot of times if you don't watch them, they don't do it. Sometimes they blow it off with a hose and get it all over the shop. Some men use a brush, catch the dust, and throw it in the garage."

"The air hose is quicker," he said. "The trouble is it spreads all over the shop. When the workers take off their masks, they breathe the asbestos that is floating in the air."

Many workers ignore precautions because the danger appears so far off — the incubation period for asbestos diseases is between 10 and 35 years. But then the results are debilitating and often fatal.

Dr. Irving Selikoff of Ridgewood who heads the Mount Sinai Medical School's Environmental Sciences Laboratory and is credited with provoking public awareness about asbestos hazards, is

working with governments and unions to test workers who have been exposed to the dangerous fibers.

New Jersey Health Department spokesman Mitchell Leon said the state plans to work with Selikoff within the next few months to test state employees who have been exposed to asbestos dust at the central motor pool and state police garages.

The fibers that make up asbestos dust float in the air unseen. Even short exposure can be dangerous.

There are reports of workers contracting mesothelioma, a rare form of cancer caused by asbestos, years after one day of exposure in shipyards.

Asbestos diseases have even struck wives who washed their husbands' contaminated clothes.

Asbestosis occurs when scar tissue builds up around the particles, making the lungs hard, inelastic, and unable to hold much air.

Smokers who are exposed to asbestos are eight times as likely to get lung cancer as other smokers.

Dr. Nicholson of Mount Sinai said he knew of four brake workers who had been hospitalized for asbestos-linked diseases. And he said, he had heard of many others.

Tests on those who work with insulation, many forms of which contain asbestos, have already shown a high rate of asbestosis and cancer. Researchers are now testing brake mechanics.

Sam Meyers, president of United Auto Workers Local 259 in New York City, said medical exams conducted by Selikoff showed that some of the members of his union have been affected by exposure to asbestos.

Meyers said the union was taking

measures to ensure compliance with safety rules. "If a worker in a union shop doesn't wear a mask, the union delegate is called."

He said workers must water down dust and use vacuums. "Brake dust is indiscriminate. It goes into everybody's lungs. If I'm working next to a guy and the dust emanates, I'm breathing it too."

Last month New York City municipal garage workers who belong to District Council 37 of the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees, began a similar program of medical tests.

Jim Ducker, the union's director of health and safety, said there are no safety directives on handling asbestos. The city's way of handling brake dust puts workers in extreme danger, he said. "They just blow it out with an air hose."

There is no federal law on handling asbestos dust. The government simply says that employees have a right to work in a safe environment. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), which enforces this law, requires that the amount of asbestos dust in the air be below a certain limit. If OSHA inspectors find asbestos levels too high, it can require a company to take steps to reduce it.

Firms are first supposed to seek engineering remedies such as supplying vacuums and having exhaust systems installed. If that is not sufficient, masks should be provided.

The dangers of brake asbestos dust are so well known that the refusal to

y controls urged is exploitation

Raether, the association's executive director. "The necessary trust relationship that now exists between funeral director and those served would be impaired."

The report singles out the association as one of the major reasons for the practices it criticizes.

"One feature of the funeral industry that has had broad effects in the funeral-buying public is that, for over a century, the undertaking trade has sought to elevate itself to the status of a profession," the report said.

The report said the funeral directors' association has campaigned for state laws to forbid price advertising.

This has meant that funeral directors generally do not advertise prices, do not provide prices over the telephone, do not encourage the preplanning of burial arrangements, "and do not otherwise make basic information on prices and offerings available to the public," the report said.

The proposed regulation would make it illegal for a funeral director to try to increase his bill by such tactics as fail-

ing to display less expensive caskets, misrepresenting legal or religious requirements, and requiring a casket for cremation.

Fine for "body snatching"

While it says these practices are widespread in the industry, other practices that generally are frowned on also would be made illegal and subject to a \$10,000 fine per violation. These include "body snatching," or taking possession of a corpse without a family's permission.

Several groups that favor lower funeral costs praised the report.

"We welcome these efforts to require full public disclosure of funeral requirements and costs and to bring greater competition to the funeral service industry," a spokesman for the American Association of Retired Persons said.

An official of the Continental Association of Funeral and Memorial Societies, a consumer group that helps people arrange simple funerals, said, "The thousands of letters we get each year requesting assistance in arranging funerals shows the degree to which bereaved families have been at the mercy of funeral directors."

All that jazz



It was a juzzy White House yesterday when President Carter led a concert of 50 of the nation's most renowned jazz musicians, including one of the oldest, Eubie Blake, the distinguished ragtime pianist.

Herrin guilty of manslaughter

OPEC extends freeze on oil prices to Jan. 1

GENEVA, Switzerland (AP) — The reduction in consumption in the indus-

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