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Cancer peril cited on inhaling asbestos fibers

WASHINGTON (AP) — A group of labor leaders and doctors said Tuesday the danger of cancer from breathing asbestos fibers is increasing sharply in the United States as the use of asbestos grows.

"It may be the most devastating environmental disaster yet perpetrated by any industrial nation," Jacob Clayman, director of the AFL-CIO's industrial union department, said at a news conference.

"Millions of American workers, their families and their neighbors may be exposed to toxic concentrations of asbestos," Clayman said in demanding stricter federal safety controls on the use of asbestos. Dr. Maxwell Borow of the Somerset Hospital in Somerville, N.J., told the con-

ference of discovering about 50 cases of one rare variety of cancer — mesothelioma — in persons living around an asbestos processing facility operated by the Johns-Manville Corp. in Manville, N.J., a town of about 15,000 population.

Borow and Dr. William J. Nicholson of the Mt. Sinai School of Medicine in New York said asbestos is increasing as a health hazard in all cities as its use increases in the manufacture of textiles, cement, ship building, insulation, piping and other products.

Borow said it takes 20 to 40 years after exposure for various types of cancer to develop from inhaling asbestos fibers and that all such cases

were fatal within a year or a year and one-half.

Clayman said asbestos was only one of hundreds of potentially lethal industrial substances that the federal government should control under the recently enacted occupational health and safety act, and the environmental protection act.

He said the Labor Department and the Department of

Health, Education and Welfare and private industry have done little to eliminate such hazards.