FILE NAME: New York State & NY Times (NY)

DATE: 1970 June 6

DOC#: NY025

DOCUMENT DESCRIPTION: NYT Article - City to Stop Spraying Asbestos; Material Was Linked to Cancer

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New York Times (1857-Current file); Jun 16, 1970; ProQuest Historical Newspapers The New York Times (1851 - pg. 44

City to Stop Spraying Asbestos; Material Was Linked to Cancer

Mayor Lindsay yesterday ordered the spraying of asbestos halted in all public construction projects.

His order followed findings by the Environmental Protection Administration that spraying of asbestos was not only harmful to construction workers at the site but could pollute the air over a much larger area. Asbestos is believed to be a cancer-causing agent.

Last April the administration issued regulations requiring that tarpaulins cover the area where asbestos is being sprayed on private construction projects, and that waste asbestos be collected and buried in designated areas.

The Mayor's order yesterday said that he wanted to "adopt an even more stringent policy" for public agencies involved in construction projects.

He therefore directed the city agencies to forgo use of sprayed asbestos in all future public construction "wherever possible." In the event that use of the "technique of insulation"—that is, spraying under tarpaulins—is unavoidable, then city agencies must follow standards as least as stringent as those for private contracting jobs, he said.

Dr. Irving Selikoff of Mount Sinai Hospital, who has been studying the effects of asbestos for many years, testified at a recent city hearing that nearly one asbestos worker out of five tested here since 1943 died of lung cancer.

Since the April order many contractors have discontinued the use of asbestos and switched to substitutes, but Dr. Selikoff has said that such substitutes may be just as damaging.

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