Painters Distr
Council
Detroit.

OSHA WARNS THAT DRY - WALL SPACKLING
CONTAINS DANGEROUS ASBESTOS HAZARD

The Labor Department learns that many spackling and taping compounds used by home builders to cover seams in dry-wall joints contain asbestos fibers beyond OSHA asbestos health standard limits. It alerts industry and labor to this new-found source of hazardous exposure to asbestos fibers.

Employees sanding these spackling and taping joints smooth before painting may expose themselves to three to 15.7 asbestos fibers per cubic centimeters of air, the Department says. OSHA's asbestos health standard limits employee exposure to five fibers per cubic centimeter on an eight-hour time weighted average.

OSHA was alerted to the new hazard by Dr. Marcus M. Key, director of the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. NIOSH is OSHA's research arm.

Key said an examination of 17 members of Painters Local 1974, New York City, conducted by Dr. Irving J. Selikoff, director of the Mt. Sinai School of Medicine of the City University of New York, revealed that the lungs of nine of 17 workers examined showed positive X-ray evidence of fibrosis. Fibrosis is a condition marked by a relative increase of fibers in any internal organ.

Although Selikoff cautioned that conclusions cannot be drawn from such new data, they suggest that a serious health hazard may exist among home builders because lung cancer, which often follows fibrosis, seldom develops in fewer than 20 years of exposure.

Assistant Secretary of Labor John H. Stender cautions that many employers and employees, particularly in the home-building industry, may be exposed to unacceptable levels of carcinogenic asbestos. The OSHA field staff in more than 100 offices nationwide, and all states with OSHA-approved job safety and health plans, have been notified of the new source of asbestos exposure. Trade associations, other employers groups, unions, and representatives of the construction industry are being asked to join the effort to alert all employers and employees to the potential hazard and of the need to comply with OSHA's asbestos standard to assure employee protection.

Asbestos is one of the five toxic substances (the others are carbon monoxide, lead, silica, and cotton dust) that have received special attention from OSHA inspectors since announcement of the agency's "Target Health Hazards Program" in January 1971.

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