QUESTION

Do asbestos-containing brake linings used on trucks, busses and automobiles release harmful amounts of asbestos dust into community air?

ANSWER

Brake linings used in transportation vehicles contain up to 55 percent asbestos fiber, but this fiber is locked into the linings with various resins and polymers. When brakes are applied, enormous amounts of heat are generated, which changes the chemical nature of the asbestos in the lining, thus producing a non-fibrous, non-toxic material called fosterite. Studies conducted in the United States and Great Britain have shown that brake lining dust contains only traces (one to three percent) of free asbestos fiber.

In fact, the total amount of free fiber released by brake lining wear throughout the United States in an entire year is less than 20% of the total emissions of particulate matter in a city the size of Los Angeles in a single day!

In addition, tests conducted in New York City at specially selected locations where traffic is heavy and braking frequent have shown that asbestos dust levels are only marginally higher than normal background levels, and many thousands of times lower than levels which could be considered potentially hazardous.

QUESTION

Is asbestos used in the manufacture of clothing worn by the general public?

ANSWER

In 1971, a clothing manufacturer imported cloth from Italy that contained 8 percent asbestos fiber and was used to make 200,000 women's overcoats. An emotional outcry resulted, but Food & Drug Administration tests showed that the amount of asbestos dust which could be generated from such a coat, even under extreme conditions, would not pose a health hazard to the wearer of the coat.

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