



NEWS & NOTES

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September 28, 1984

AIA/NA'S NINTH INDUSTRY-GOVERNMENT CONFERENCE DRAWS EXCELLENT ATTENDANCE

Over 120 persons attended the Association's Ninth Industry-Government Conference held Sept. 18-19 at the Marriott Twin Bridges Hotel, Arlington, VA. The conference began with a reception and dinner on Sept. 18 and concluded following lunch on Sept. 19; the event was held in conjunction with AIA/NA's 14th annual meeting and third quarter board of directors meeting.

The dinner speaker on Sept. 18 was Dr. Edward J. Burger, Director, Institute for Health Policy Analysis, Georgetown University Medical Center. Dr. Burger spoke of a need for a public policy regarding industry issues that could bring about resolution without litigation being the all too frequent result. Of interest is Dr. Burger's organization's plans for a conference on causation and compensation for occupational disease and disability. Further details on this forthcoming conference may be obtained directly from Dr. Burger, 2233 Wisconsin Ave., N.W., Suite 324, Washington, D.C. 20007/(202) 625-2115)

At first session on Sept. 19, OSHA's Special Assistant for Regulatory Affairs, Gary A. Strobel, reviewed his agency's ongoing efforts to issue a revision to the asbestos standard well as other activities of interest. Other speakers during morning session included Jim E. Lapping, Director Safety and Health, Building and Construction Trades Department, AFL-CIO. Lapping emphasized the need for a separate construction standard on asbestos by OSHA and alluded to the mutual appreciation of this need by his organization and this Association. Wilfred Penney, Director General, Asbestos Information Centre (United Kingdom), presented an international overview of approach to regulation of asbestos and referred to the constructive work being done by the Asbestos International Association. A panel consisting of Gary J. Nash, Director General, Minerals and Metals Strategy Branch, Government of Canada and Dr. Jacques Dunnigan, Director General, Institute for Research and Development on Asbestos, University of Sherbrooke, Quebec, addressed the complex issue of asbestos and substitutes. The pitfalls of a strategy

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of banning a substance which can be controlled was thoroughly explored. Dr. Malcolm Ross, U.S. Geological Survey, gave an interesting presentation on cancer incidence in the United States.

The concluding government and conference speaker was Dr. Peter W. Preuss, Associate Executive Director, Consumer Product Safety Commission. Dr. Preuss reviewed the areas wherein CPSC has continuing interest of asbestos.

The balance of the conference, which has chaired by AIA/NA President John L. Myers, included a report on the work of the Association and a legislation review by staff.

These conferences are among the major activities of AIA/NA. They afford an opportunity for a meaningful update and open exchange of information on a range of areas affecting the asbestos industry. Next year's conference is planned for September 17-18 in the Washington, D.C., area.

SEIU FILES ASBESTOS IN SCHOOLS SUIT AGAINST EPA

On Sept. 11, the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) filed suit against the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in the U.S. District Court in Washington, DC over the asbestos in schools issue. The suit asks the court to order the EPA to propose new rules within 30 days which provide standards for determining when an asbestos hazard requiring correction exists in a school, require that abatement activities be undertaken where such hazards exist, and provide standards for performing abatement activities, including standards for the protection of those persons who perform such activities.

EPA rules at present require only that schools inspect for asbestos. There are no rules which require that any abatement action be taken or that specify how an abatement activity be conducted.

Last Nov., the SEIU filed a petition with the EPA pursuant to provisions of the Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA) asking that the agency issue rules requiring abatement of hazardous asbestos in a safe and complete manner in schools and other public and commercial buildings. Besides holding a series of public hearings on the issue, the EPA has not taken any action on the petition. The SEIU has about 850,000 members, with over one-third employed as building service and maintenance workers in schools and other buildings.

HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE EXAMINES ASBESTOS CONTROL EFFORTS

On Sept. 26, a hearing was held before the Subcommittee on Commerce, Transportation and Tourism of the U.S. House of

Representatives on the adequacy of federal efforts to control asbestos hazards. The hearing, chaired by Rep. James J. Florio (D-NJ), focused most attention on the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) program for dealing with asbestos in schools.

Rep. Florio's opening statement cited EPA's regulatory efforts as being "bitterly criticized" by local school officials who say that the agency has withheld adequate guidance on how to conduct inspections for asbestos and assess the degree of hazard. This approach has "set up" local officials to take the brunt of public concern without a reasonable basis for a meaningful response to the problem. Rep. Florio also noted that haphazard and careless abatement projects which occur in the absence of adequate guidance should have been foreseen by EPA before it launched its inspection and notification rule.

Testifying on behalf of EPA was Dr. John A. Moore, Assistant Administrator for the Office of Pesticides and Toxic Substances. Dr. Moore noted that, "the mere presence of asbestos does not necessarily mean a hazard exists," and that it would be extremely difficult to objectively prescribe abatement requirements that are not tailored to a specific case. In spite of pressure from Rep. Florio and other committee members to obtain a commitment from EPA to establish standards and regulations specifically stating when asbestos poses a health hazard in school buildings, Dr. Moore stated that the current approach of providing technical advice to schools that are responsible for deciding upon the appropriate corrective action would continue to be followed by the agency.

Dr. Moore also ran into some difficulty with Subcommittee members over his comments on EPA support for funding for the Asbestos School Hazard Abatement Act (N&N, Jul.). Although Congress has already appropriated \$50 million for the purposes of the Act, to provide grants or interest free loans for school asbestos abatement projects, Moore said the EPA may not seek the full \$600 million available for the program through 1990. "We feel it will be counterproductive," Moore said. "School districts will just wait for that money to be appropriated before they will take the action that needs to be taken immediately." These comments prompted the Agency to issue a clarification the next day which stated, "EPA feels it is simply too early to know what funds will be needed in the future."

EPA had created recently a new asbestos branch under the chemical control division of the Office of Pesticides and Toxic Substances to administer the requirements of the Asbestos School Hazard Abatement Act. Joseph DeSantis, presently chief of the new chemical regulations branch, will head the asbestos program. It is reported that EPA is actively recruiting for scientific and technical personnel to staff the new branch.

Presenting testimony which strongly called upon the EPA to establish standards which would provide objective guidance to schools on when and how abatement activities must be undertaken

were William Borwegen of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) and Anthony Mazzocchi of Parents Against Asbestos Hazards in Schools. Borwegen, whose union is suing the EPA over the asbestos in schools issue (N&N, this issue), testified that in the absence of mandatory standards, asbestos abatement contractors are having a field day. He cited the claim of some contractors that 80 percent of all asbestos abatement work is being conducted improperly, leaving schools more contaminated than if the asbestos were never touched.

Presenting testimony from an industry perspective were John Welch, President of the Safe Buildings Alliance (SBA), and B. J. Pigg, Executive Director of the Asbestos Information Association/North America (AIA/NA). The Safe Buildings Alliance is a newly-formed association of companies that previously manufactured asbestos-containing materials for building construction.

Welch stated it is essential that the EPA step in to correct an increasingly alarming situation that it, in part, helped create. He agreed with other witnesses that state and local officials desperately need guidance in determining those conditions that require abatement and those that do not. Pigg's testimony reviewed regulatory activities concerning asbestos by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) as well as the EPA. In response to questioning from the subcommittee, Pigg concurred that greater guidance from the EPA concerning asbestos in schools was appropriate.

NRDC PETITIONS EPA TO BAN ASBESTOS IN BRAKES

On Sept. 13, the National Resources Defense Council (NRDC) filed a petition with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) under section 21 of the Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA) calling upon the Agency to institute a ban on the use of asbestos in the brakes of all new cars and trucks and in all replacement brakes in existing motorized vehicles. NRDC is a national nonprofit membership corporation with over 40,000 members and contributors.

According to a statement by Jacqueline Warren, NRDC Senior Staff Attorney, the group petitioned the EPA to prohibit the use of asbestos in automobile brakes because it is the single largest use of asbestos today, accounting for nearly one fourth of all asbestos consumed in the U.S. every year. "The federal government is beginning to regulate the use of asbestos in homes, school buildings and a number of consumer products," she stated, "but they have completely ignored asbestos brake products, which we believe pose a serious health risk to the public, especially people who live in urban areas and those who work in automobile maintenance shops."

NRDC's petition claims that several substitutes for asbestos are currently available for use in automobile brakes. The

petition cited domestic and foreign automobile manufacturers who have successfully used semi-metallic disc brakes in the past few years. In addition, alternative fibers to asbestos are now available for use in brake-related friction products. Specifically mentioned were DuPont's aramid-fiber products, which the petition claimed provide all the physical and thermal wear properties of asbestos products. The health risks of alternate products were not discussed in the petition.

SENATE PANEL APPROVES SUPERFUND REAUTHORIZATION

The Senate Environment and Public Works Committee reported out a bill, S.2892, on Sept. 13 that would extend the Superfund program at the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for 5 years with \$7.5 billion in funding. Senator Robert T. Stafford (R-VT), who chairs the committee would like to see a Superfund reauthorization passed in this session of Congress, although the administration favors waiting until next year when the current Superfund program expires.

Among its provisions, S.2892 contains language to establish a Victim Assistance Demonstration Program proposed by Senator George Mitchell (D-ME). Put forward as a compromise measure to address the controversial issue of providing compensation for injuries alleged to result from exposure to hazardous wastes, the proposed program would authorize the expenditure of \$30 million for medical, disability, and burial costs in 5 states to be selected by the EPA.

Following favorable passage by the Environment Committee, S.2892 was referred to the Senate Finance Committee for consideration of the revenue raising portions of the bill. Although the Finance Committee held two days of hearings on the measure, no action is expected before Congress adjourns for its election recess on Oct. 5.

The House of Representatives has already adopted a 5 year, \$10.2 billion dollar reauthorization of the Superfund (N&N, Aug.). Were the Senate to pass its own version of a reauthorization, any differences would have to be reconciled by a conference committee composed of House and Senate members.

OSHA CHIEF ROWLAND NAMES TWO ADDITIONAL DEPUTIES

Robert A. Rowland, named to head the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) in a recess appointment scheduled to run until the end of 1985, has named two deputy assistant secretaries of labor with each having specific areas of responsibility. Both had worked with Rowland when he headed the Occupational Safety and Health Review Commission (OSHRC) prior to his OSHA appointment.

Michael N. Korbey will serve as deputy assistant secretary for public affairs, administration, policy development, legislative affairs, and regulatory analysis. Korbey previously was the executive director at OSHRC, and, prior to that, worked as director of administration at the Viguerie Company.

Jane A. Matheson will serve as deputy assistant secretary for field operations, with responsibility for the 10 OSHA regional offices. Matheson, formerly a partner in a Dallas law firm, had served as chief counsel to Rowland at OSHRC. She has also worked as a trial attorney with the Dallas regional office of the Labor Department's Office of the Solicitor.

Korbey and Matheson join Patrick R. Tyson, a career Labor Department official, as deputy assistant secretaries. Tyson served as acting head of OSHA for nearly four months following the departure of Thorne Auchter in March.

PHYSICIANS, NURSES VIE FOR ASBESTOS MEDICAL SURVEILLANCE RESPONSIBILITY

According to comments filed with the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) on the agency's proposed revision of the asbestos standard, both the American Occupational Medical Association (AOMA) and the American Association of Occupational Health Nurses (AAOHN) would like to be given responsibility for the administration of the standard's medical surveillance program.

Testimony of Matilda Babbitz, executive director of AAOHN, noted that "occupational health nurses have assumed leadership in developing and implementing programs to protect America's workers from the harmful effects of asbestos exposure."

However, the comments of the AOMA maintained, "In our opinion, it is only the physician who has the background and training necessary to pull together the various aspects of an occupational health program," including the correlation of the physical examination findings, the laboratory data, the exposure history, and epidemiologic and toxicologic data.

The AOMA, which represents 4,000 physicians practicing either full-time or part-time occupational medicine, noted that the proposed standard does not indicate who would have responsibility for the administration of the medical surveillance program. "To be honest, it never occurred to us that it might be any other than the occupational physicians, who traditionally have had accountability for the occupational health of those employees served," the AOMA stated. "We understand another group has sought to assume this responsibility."

EPA gets mixed reviews under Ruckelshaus

By Dianne Dumanoski
Boston Globe

Environmental Protection Agency workers who welcomed William D. Ruckelshaus back to the agency in March 1983 cheered wildly. Some even cried. Others waved handmade signs, among them one that read, "The Environment Welcomes You Back."

"I felt as if I were at the liberation of Paris," recalled one EPA employee recently. Ruckelshaus, who headed the agency during its first years in the early 1970s, was, for many, not just the new boss. He was the man who would deliver them from the enemy.

A year and a half later, not surprisingly, the feelings about Ruckelshaus are a more complicated mixture, dominated by gratitude and disappointment.

The most important thing, observ-

"He has returned EPA to a professional stance... simply by being a decent, honest person."

— William Drayton,
former EPA official

ers emphasize, is that he is not Anne McGill Burford; not a sagebrush rebel who came to Washington convinced that all environmental regulation was "excessive"; not an administrator fundamentally opposed to the mission of his agency.

Yet he has not been the environmental leader many were hoping for when President Reagan swore him in in May 1983 to succeed Burford, who resigned amid controversy.

For those who wondered then whether his nomination signaled a real change in Reagan's environmental policy, or merely a politically expedient change of personnel, it has become increasingly evident that the administration has not shifted its fundamental orientation on the environment.

In his homecoming talk to EPA employees in March 1983, Ruckelshaus assured them that Reagan would be behind them as they set things right. "He is committed to this agency doing the job assigned it by Congress and to giving us the resources to do it."

Since then, however, the White House has repeatedly ignored Ruckelshaus' counsel, notably on issues like acid rain, early renewal of the Superfund toxic-waste cleanup program and EPA's own budget.

As critics see it, it is the White

House's Office of Management and Budget (OMB) that has had the dominant role in setting environmental policy.

Sen. David Durenberger (R., Minn.) said: "I had hoped he would be the environmental person in this administration." But from all evidence, he added, "the President doesn't spend a lot of time talking to Bill about the environment."

"He is treated like Rodney Dangerfield in the White House," observed Kenneth Kamlet of the National Wildlife Federation, referring to the comedian who eternally complains that he never gets any respect.

A story about a White House meeting at which the President repeatedly called Ruckelshaus "Don" is cited frequently as an indication of the place Ruckelshaus and the environment have in Reagan's thoughts. When a staff member corrected him,

Reagan reportedly joked that he was wondering what Don Rumsfeld (who served briefly as Reagan's special envoy to the Mideast) was doing at a meeting on acid rain.

(Efforts to get comment from the White House were unsuccessful, and Ruckelshaus' office said he could not schedule an interview for several weeks.)

Most observers put at the top of a list of Ruckelshaus' accomplishments the salvation of EPA itself and the rebuilding of staff morale and the agency's public image.

"If what had been going on at EPA went on for another year, there would have been nothing left," said William Drayton, a former EPA official who heads a watchdog group called Environmental Safety.

"It is essential that people believe that EPA is acting in good faith with the best knowledge available. That was lost in the Burford era. Bill Ruckelshaus had done a lot to restore that. He has returned EPA to a professional stance. He's made a contribution simply by being a decent, honest person. That is not the standard you would usually apply, but in the context of the abuse that the Reagan administration brought to EPA, that's important."

Under Burford, for instance, EPA's Enforcement Office had been disbanded and enforcement actions virtually stopped. Ruckelshaus brought with him a clear directive for aggressive enforcement from the administrator's office, and EPA's record in this area has improved dramatically.

Despite the improvements, critics and many EPA employees working on enforcement stress that EPA's budget and staffing still fall far short of their responsibilities.

Ruckelshaus, furthermore, hasn't been able or hasn't chosen to exercise much initiative in shaping the national environmental agenda.

Most of the major environmental laws that EPA implements have expired or are about to. Instead of pushing for congressional renewal, according to a staff person for a House committee that oversees some EPA activities, Ruckelshaus repeatedly has come before committees urging that Congress delay action. "He keeps telling us, 'We're going to study it; we need to look at it more.'"

One concrete measure of the extent of EPA's recovery since the Burford era is the EPA budget.

By the time Ruckelshaus took over, calculates Jonathan Lash of the Natural Resources Defense Council, EPA had lost 29 percent of its total budget, 30 percent of its staff and 42 percent of its research funding.

Asbestos

Strip tease

Is the anti-asbestos lobby moving too quickly, too late? As a building material, asbestos and related products have been installed (mainly as insulation) in millions of homes, offices and factories for decades. It is strong, stable and fire-resistant. It also kills. Inhaled asbestos fibres cause mesothelioma (an incurable form of lung cancer) and other respiratory diseases. Now, fearful of the hazards of exposure to asbestos, people are stampeding to tear out the stuff from buildings. Yet stripping out the asbestos could kill more people than it saves.

The lethal nature of the mineral among asbestos workers (and their families) has been known for the past 50 years; in Britain and America together, 2,000 people die each year from mesothelioma. Until now, nobody has quantified the risk to householders living alongside asbestos.

In a recent study commissioned by America's Environmental Protection Agency, the National Academy of Sciences concluded that the typical amount of asbestos dust in the home (including homes containing no asbestos) is about 400 fibres per cubic metre. Studies in Britain have shown that, even in buildings containing damaged asbestos, the density of fibres is no higher. The lifetime public risk from asbestos-linked cancer is in the region of nine in a million—nearly 900 times smaller than the risk of death through accidents in the home.

The Economist
(U.K.)

September 15, 1984

Philadelphia Inquirer

Sunday, Sept. 2, 1984

-over-

People working with asbestos, on the other hand, can be subjected to dust levels many hundreds of times higher than environmental levels. The maximum asbestos-dust level to which British workers can legally be exposed is 500,000 fibres per cubic metre for white asbestos, which many (erroneously) believe to be less deadly, and 200,000 for the blue and brown types. Other countries are less stringent. Other common market countries allow twice those levels and some Americans states up to four times.

The British government's Health and Safety Executive (HSE), which is trying to ensure that workers stripping out asbestos are adequately protected, is deluged with work. It is worried that it will be unable to provide proper inspection of all sites. In a bid to get to grips with an increasingly chaotic situation, the HSE last month introduced a licensing scheme for those working with asbestos. The scheme aims to prevent cowboy operators from carrying out the stripping work and to concentrate on those sites likely to have problems. It might be better to let sleeping asbestos lie.

Asbestos Maligned

Asbestos...

That's all that's in papers, magazines, and whatever else printed material. All of this material is false unless proven otherwise. What it does do is put the general public out of work and on unemployment and welfare, then people complain about the unemployment and welfare rates. I just wish these people who are so scared of asbestos would check into it more; they would find a large surprise about asbestos and its usefulness.

There is no such thing as asbestos, as it is so-called. It is just a word derived from the word asbestos itself, making a lot of people rich and a lot of people poor.

Asbestos is not a disease nor will it ever be. It is a person's immunity system which is subjected to everything, such as tobacco, alcohol and everything else around us.

It is just a gimmick to take peoples' jobs by tearing down schools and numerous other things and putting approximately 2.5 billion on unemployment and welfare.

There is not one person who can tell me what is at fault with asbestos. Articles in newspapers, magazines and other publications are always degrading asbestos. I wish they would check their facts before they are printed.

RICHARD W. JONES

Eden Mills

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AUG 30 1984

Asbestos hazards

From Dr John C. Gilson

Sir, Your "macabre" picture of asbestos "clean" up in London (September 6) would cause amazement and disbelief to the inhabitants of the chrysotile mining town of Thetford, Quebec. For many years between the wars the pavements were so white with the dust in the morning that the children left footprints on the way to school.

Yet more than 40 years later, careful enquiries have revealed no significant health hazard to the general population. Only those much more heavily exposed in the mines and mills were at some risk. Of course modern dust control has now removed the children's fun.

Your reported statement by Mr Dalziel "the problem of asbestos is that we have no idea just how harmful it can be" is far from the facts. No environmental hazard, with the possible exception of cigarette smoking, has been so exhaustively studied.

The health effects of chrysotile asbestos depend on the amount inhaled and the length of time. Thus, exposure from an accidental fire will be of negligible length

compared to a lifetime's work in an asbestos factory.

The "burning flakes of asbestos in the air" have an air of improbability as asbestos is incombustible and fortunately the flakes will be too large to inhale. The fine respirable dust would have been rapidly dispersed by the heat of the fire and the wind, so reducing the fibre concentration to very low levels compared to that in factories using asbestos.

Dr Newhouse recently drew attention in your columns to the alarm and distress such articles cause to those not well able to assess the real risks arising from exposure to asbestos.

The recently published Ontario Royal Commission Report on the Use of Asbestos (1984) has attempted to put the risk into perspective. The risk of death (per 100,000 population/year) is for example, cardiovascular diseases 337, cancers 165, motor vehicle accidents 23, asbestos disease from building exposure 0.029.

Yours sincerely,
J. C. GILSON,
Hembury Hill Farm,
Honiton,
Devon.

Fear of asbestos

From Dr Muriel L. Newhouse

Sir, In your account (July 2) of asbestos hazards in storage heaters you state that "A single asbestos fibre can kill when it is inhaled and lodges in the human lungs". This statement is based on a statistical probability.

Careful studies of asbestos miners and factory workers have shown a direct relationship between concentrations of asbestos fibres in air and deaths from asbestos-related diseases. At high concentrations the risk is very high, at low concentrations the risk is very low; only theoretically at concentrations just above zero can there be a perceptible risk.

Electron microscopy examina-

tions of lungs of persons dying of diseases quite unrelated to asbestos exposure have revealed the presence of over a million fibres per gram of lung tissue.

Statements of this sort distress and confuse the general public. I myself have recently seen a patient with such a severe asbestos phobia that she felt compelled to scrub out her airing cupboard, which had previously been lined with asbestos boarding, three or four times a day.

Every effort must be made to prevent contamination of the environment with asbestos, but the information given to the public should be accurate and informative.

Yours faithfully,
MURIEL L. NEWHOUSE,
Flat 6,
30 Hyde Park Gardens, W2.

LONDON TIMES
17 JULY, 1984

Union Says E.P.A. Is Stalling on Asbestos

By PHILIP SHABECOFF

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Sept. 11 — Calling asbestos in the schools the worst potential health threat to children since polio, the Service Employees International Union sued today to require the Environmental Protection Agency to address the danger.

The union asked the Federal District Court here to order the environmental agency to set standards for asbestos hazards in schools and to propose a plan within 30 days for removing asbestos in school buildings.

John J. Sweeney, president of the union, charged that the Reagan Admin-

istration was deliberately delaying announcing plans for asbestos until after the election because it planned to do nothing.

But Alvin L. Alm, deputy administrator of the environmental agency, said its current program to protect children from asbestos in schools was working and that the steps advocated by the union would increase rather than reduce the dangers to children.

15 Million Children Involved

Fibers from crumbling asbestos, once widely used as a building and insulating material because of its heat-resistant properties, can cause cancer

Clean

THE TIMES
Monday, 17 September 1984

Asbestos removers flourish despite risks involved

Faulty asbestos removal

By Linnet Myers

The news last week from the federal government that hundreds of thousands—perhaps millions—of buildings in the U.S. contain potentially cancer-causing asbestos is beefing up an already growing demand for asbestos abatement contractors. About 300 firms are offering their services, despite serious health and legal questions regarding removal. And that number could hit 1,000 by 1990, according to one trade group.

Meanwhile, the Environmental Protection Agency, trying to get a handle on the magnitude of the problem, is reviewing two recent asbestos studies. One indicates that about 700,000 public, commercial and apartment buildings contain asbestos. The other shows that 31,000 primary and secondary, public and private schools—about 35% of the national total—also contain it. A third ongoing government-sponsored probe, conducted by the Mount Sinai Environmental Health Sciences Center, focuses on early evidence that 100,000 to 200,000 homes in Orange County, Calif., contain asbestos.

The situation is complicated. Experts caution against concluding that all asbestos in buildings has to be removed. John A. Moore, EPA's toxics chief, emphasizes that the agency does not "pass any judgment on the quality of the asbestos material" in the structures.

Asbestos is dangerous only when it enters the lungs. EPA indicates the material is primarily found in boiler rooms as a wrapping for heat pipes and in ceiling coatings. Problems arise when products containing asbestos degrade.

Bad to worse. Even building owners willing to foot the bill for removal could have problems. Each building really needs its own set of specifications for asbestos removal, say the experts. And there is no easy way to locate legitimate consultants and contractors to do the job. "So many contractors are getting into the business that don't know what they are doing," says Frederick C. Treadway, president of Specialty Systems, Inc., Richmond, Ind. Specialty started removing asbestos in late 1979. "There is a need for certifying the contractors and the workers."

"Because of this, 'in some cases, it's best to leave the building alone,'" says

Dennis T. Garde, vice president of Asbestos Control, Inc., Mt. Prospect, Ill., another asbestos removal contractor.

There are some training courses for asbestos removal. A two-and-a-half-day

course is offered by the Association of Wall and Ceiling Industries International (AWCI), Washington, D.C. Other training is being given by two fledgling associations, National Association of Asbestos Abatement Contractors, Kansas City, Kan., which has 100 members, and the National Asbestos Council. The Georgia Institute of Technology also offers a course:

"The concern is that many of the contractors offering their services have not all done their homework," says Gene Erwin, AWCI's technical director.

Liability. Other than proper removal, a big issue for an asbestos abatement contractor is liability, says Garde. A contractor could potentially be sued by a building owner, by the occupants and by the workers on the job.

Protection against liability comes from general liability insurance, which is three to four times as costly for asbestos removers as it is for most contractors, and from workers' compensation. "Most contractors don't tell their insurance companies they are doing asbestos abatement," says Treadway. His firm is insured for \$5 million at a cost of about \$40,000 a year.

For those firms that tell their insurance carriers, there is another problem. "A company risks us for a year and then drops us," says Garde. In four years, his firm has had three carriers.

As a result, "very few contractors have properly written coverage specific for asbestos exposure," says Garde.

There are three ways of dealing with asbestos: encapsulating it using a sprayed-on coating; encasing it by building a structure around it; or removing it. The first two are only stopgap measures, say Garde and Treadway.

The cost of removal, which can vary from \$3 to \$10 per sq ft, depends on the size of the building (there is economy in size), the extent of the problem and how much of the building has to be replaced afterwards. Both Treadway and Garde say that despite the problems, the market is profitable. Their firms are growing because there are so many buildings that contain asbestos.

perils lives, doctor says

"THE MORAL to the story clear," a doctor told the roomful of contractors. "How much disease and death there will be lies in your hands."

Dr. Edwin Holstein was speaking to people in the business of removing asbestos from schools and public buildings. "If not done right, you'd have been better off leaving the place alone," said Holstein, the Mt. Sinai School of Medicine New York.

A bad job means that asbestos fibers would still be in the air where it could be inhaled by workers and schoolchildren, he said. Disease—and death—would follow in some.

The group that invited Holstein to speak was formed this year to ensure that the job is done right, founders said. The organization, the National Association of Asbestos Abatement Contractors, "hopes to be a national qualifying group with the authority to approve or disprove of contractors," said N. Wilson, its regional president.

CURRENTLY, ANY contractor can remove asbestos, said Ter Stanuch, an asbestos expert for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

"They can use high school dropouts, pay them \$5 an hour as just say, 'Go scrape it down,'" said Stanuch, who spoke at the association's symposium last week at Rosemont hotel. The EPA has a list of contractors, but "all you have to do is call us and ask to be put on the list and you'd be put on the list," he said. "Some of them would not recommend."

The field is plagued by "fly-by-nighters," said W. David Kimbrell, executive director of the contractors' association, which is based in Lawrence, Kan. "They go in there; they don't do it right and then end up with contamination in a school."

HOLSTEIN UNDERScored the importance of proper asbestos removal by noting that diseases caused by asbestos, such as lung cancer, asbestosis and mesothelioma, have no cures and are "uniformly fatal."

He cited as an example the experience of 17,800 insulation workers who were heavily exposed to asbestos before the 1970s, when it was commonly used in insulation.

In a normal group of 17,800 people, 105 would be expected to die of cancer in a 10-year period, none of asbestosis and probably none of a rare tumor called pleuromesothelioma, he said.

But among the insulation workers, 486 died of lung cancer, 166 of asbestosis and 63 of mesothelioma, Holstein said.

"Don't cut corners," he told contractors. "You won't see it [disease] that day. You won't see it that week. You won't see it a month or year. . . . But some die of it."

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and other serious disease when inhaled or ingested.

A survey by the environmental agency, not yet made public, has found that about 15 million children and 1.4 million employees are in school buildings containing asbestos. Agency officials say that only a small percentage of those buildings contain asbestos in dangerous form.

The Service Employees International Union has about 100,000 school workers among its 550,000 members.

The environmental agency requires school systems to inspect for asbestos in their buildings and to inform parents and teachers of their findings. But it

does not require the removal of asbestos, and it has not defined what constitutes a dangerous exposure.

Additional Steps Considered

The agency is considering additional steps, such as setting more precise guidelines to identify the dangers of asbestos, and is requiring that contractors who remove or otherwise handle asbestos be certified for competence.

Mr. Sweeney said thousands of schools had not made inspections for asbestos and thousands more had inspected but "don't have either the money or the inclination to clean it up."

"Incompetent removal contractors are having a field day," he said. "Workers have been observed flushing indestructible, cancer-causing asbestos materials down toilets, releasing enough fibers to contaminate an entire city's water supply."

"We Are Being Stalled"

Mr. Sweeney said the environmental agency's argument that it did not have the technical basis for setting standards for asbestos in schools "is a line we are tired of hearing," and added: "They can make all kinds of excuses on a medical and legal basis. But we are being stalled through the election."

Mr. Alm said he had not seen the union's lawsuit, but he said: "There is a certain amount of posturing that others care more about children than the E.P.A. That's nonsense. We have children, too."

He said the agency's current program was the quickest way to remove asbestos hazards threatening schoolchildren. If the agency were to draft standards, he warned, it would take at least two years until those standards were put into effect; meanwhile, school systems would be waiting to see what would be required instead of acting.

John Welch, president of the Safe Buildings Alliance, a group of companies that formerly made products containing asbestos, disputed the union's contention that asbestos in the schools constituted a serious national health problem.

He said a number of outside experts had reported that the problem of exposure to asbestos was far less serious outside the workplace than inside, and that there were relatively few schools where children were endangered.

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EPA to Scale Back Funds For Asbestos Removal

By Michel Marriott
Washington Post Staff Writer

An Environmental Protection Agency official told a congressional subcommittee yesterday that the agency will not seek full funding for a federal program to remove asbestos from the nation's schools because the program is likely to prove counterproductive.

Competition for \$50 million a year in federal grants and interest-free loans is likely to discourage many school systems from moving swiftly on their own to reduce dangerous levels of cancer-causing asbestos in their buildings, said John A. Moore, assistant administrator of pesticides and toxic substances for the EPA.

For that reason, Moore said, the EPA may not ask for the full \$600 million funding Congress is prepared to allocate for the new program through 1990.

The funds are currently available to poor schools at the greatest risk. Moore said the EPA would not seek funding for the program in fiscal 1986.

"We feel it will be counterproductive," Moore said. "School districts will just wait for that money to be appropriated before they will take the action that needs to be taken immediately," he said.

The Department of Education estimates that 15 million children

and 1.4 million school workers are exposed to materials containing asbestos, which was used to fireproof, soundproof and insulate school buildings.

"It's a classic Catch 22," said Rep. James J. Florio (D-N.J.) of Moore's position.

"Asbestos is an undisputed human carcinogen and is perhaps the most deadly and most feared toxic substance currently contaminating our environment," said Florio, chairman of the House Energy and Commerce Committee's subcommittee on commerce, transportation and tourism. The subcommittee heard more than three hours of testimony on asbestos exposure yesterday.

This fall, thousands of District parents were warned that asbestos in a number of schools was threatening the health of their children. And school systems across the country have had to wrestle with what to do once the substance was found in their schools.

The EPA requires schools to inspect for asbestos and inform parent-teacher groups and employees of its presence.

Florio and several witnesses were critical yesterday of the EPA's position on the loan program, as well as the absence of EPA standards and regulations specifically stating when asbestos poses a health hazard in school buildings.

EPA Seeking to Recover on

The Environmental Protection Agency, scrambling to contain a public relations disaster over the subject of asbestos in schools, said yesterday that it has not ruled out the possibility of seeking more federal funds to help school districts control the cancer-causing substance.

"EPA feels it is simply too early to know what funds will be needed in the future," the agency said in an unusual clarification of a top agency official's congressional testimony.

John A. Moore, head of the pesticide and toxic substances division, told a House subcommittee Wednesday that EPA considered federal spending on the hazard "counterproductive" and would not seek full funding of a \$600 million asbestos abatement program approved by Congress this summer.

Moore's statement was immediately denounced by Republicans and Democrats, who accused the agency of turning its back on millions of children and school employees potentially exposed to the substance. Asbestos was widely used as an insulating material until it was linked conclusively to a variety of lung disorders, including cancer.

Asbestos Issue

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