

Forms Lung Deposits

Asbestos, Cancer Linked, Cities Are Banning Its Use

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Chronicle News Services

New York — Several tons of it are sprayed into the air in American cities every year. Those who breathe its microscopic particles will carry it with them throughout life. And sometimes, 20 or 30 years later, the deadly effects — inability to breathe or lung cancer — begin to be felt.

The substance is asbestos, a mineral whose fireproof fibers have long been matted into felt-like sheets, and is now increasingly being sprayed on the steel beams of high rise buildings.

Regulations Started

Cities across the country, often with the help of the Asbestos Workers Unions, are beginning to regulate or ban its use as the deadly and delayed effects of contact with it are becoming known.

Most endangered are the workers who install asbestos sheets around boilers and steam pipes, or who spray it on automobile brakes or onto steel beams during construction.

But increasingly there is worry that the large amounts allowed to escape into the air during the spraying may infect thousands of residents.

'Really Dangerous'

When the new Missouri State Office Building in Kansas City was sprayed recently, "the stuff blew all over the devil," according to Richard Maupin, business manager of Asbestos Workers Local No. 27.

"Some of it went all the way downtown," he said. "The stuff is really dangerous. People can see it, but they don't know it's harmful."

An estimated 50 percent of the asbestos used in spraying is lost into the air, according to industry publications.

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Inhalation of the asbestos dust forms deposits on the lungs that are never absorbed

ing difficulty in breathing called asbestosis, is incurable and often is fatal.

Persons exposed to asbestos have, in addition, a much higher rate of lung and intestinal cancer than people never exposed to it. Smoking drastically increases the risk; persons who smoke cigarette and are exposed to the dust have a lung cancer rate 9 times higher than the statistical norm.

Wives Endangered

Even the wives of men who work with asbestos are endangered by the dust their husbands bring home on their clothes, according to Milton Goldberg, an environmental field engineer in the Allegheny County Department of Health in Pittsburgh.

"You can walk down a street where asbestos has been sprayed," he said, "and it may not affect you for 20 or 30 years."

Dr. Irving J. Selikoff, director of the Environmental Sciences Laboratory at Mount Sinai Medical Center here, and the national health authority on asbestos, said that as long ago as 1924 it was discovered that people who work with asbestos developed scarred lungs. It took almost 30 more years of study, he said, to link it with cancer.

Cities Ban Spraying

Selikoff, speaking at city hearings here that resulted in regulations on spraying asbestos, said that "every person in New York has some asbestos in his lungs."

Boston and Chicago last May became the first cities in the country to ban totally the spraying of asbestos.

New York banned it from city projects a month later, and has severely restricted its use, as have Los Angeles, Detroit, and Philadelphia. Other areas throughout the country are considering bans or regulations on spraying.

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