

Revised & Updated

EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATION
ON
ASBESTOS SCREENING PROGRAM

What is the Screening Program?

The asbestos screening program is a special effort to detect any signs of lung abnormalities in employees and pensioners as a result of exposure to asbestos while working for Du Pont.

The program consists of a review of X-rays of employees who need to work with asbestos and those employees who have had possible job-related exposure to asbestos. Other employees are receiving comparable critical review at the time of their regular physical examination. In addition, all Du Pont pensioners were contacted and invited to participate. Pensioners were encouraged to have X-rays taken at Du Pont's expense if they felt they had been exposed to asbestos during their career at Du Pont or if they were unsure of their exposure.

Under the program, chest X-rays of employees and pensioners are reviewed by a board-certified radiologist.

Why Undertake the Program?

Continuing advances in X-ray technology and medical science's increased sensitivity toward and understanding of asbestos-related abnormalities have made it possible to identify abnormalities which have been undetected by traditional evaluation methods. The need to implement these techniques on an accelerated basis became apparent when a number of asbestos-related abnormalities were detected at the Repauno and Chambers Works plants in 1979 and 1980.

Based on this experience, the Company expanded the program to employees at all sites in the United States in October 1980, and to pensioners in May 1981. The purpose of the program is to identify employees or pensioners with lung abnormalities resulting from asbestos

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exposure and provide appropriate medical attention and financial compensation in cases of Du Pont-related disability.

What is Asbestosis. Asbestos-Related Abnormalities?

Asbestosis is a disease, caused by asbestos fiber inhalation. The fibers stimulate tissue growth within the lung. This fibrous tissue can interfere with the ability of the lung to exchange oxygen and carbon dioxide with the body's blood supply.

The exact mechanism for the cause of asbestosis is not clear, but some doctors believe it is the result of the immune system of the body reacting to the presence of asbestos fibers in the lung. Asbestosis is always related to penetration of asbestos fibers into the lungs' tissue.

This condition is characterized by X-ray findings within the lower portions of the lungs, together with symptoms such as coughing and shortness of breath upon exertion and may involve progressive, disabling loss of lung capacity. Usually a doctor can hear abnormal sounds in the lungs of a person with asbestosis. Persons with asbestosis have a significantly higher risk of contracting lung cancer, particularly if the person smokes.

The most easily recognized asbestos-related abnormality is pleural thickening. Each lung is covered by a separate membrane, the pleura (see attached diagram), made up of relatively tough, protective cells. The inner surface of the chest wall is also covered with pleural membrane separated from the lung by a very small space, which is kept moist by a thin film of fluid. Pleural thickening is an abnormal condition of the pleura which may result from a number of causes, i.e., pneumonia, tuberculosis, and pleurisy.

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Pleural thickening also may be caused by asbestos fibers that have worked their way through the lung tissue and have been stopped by the tougher pleural layers. This condition is called asbestos-related pleural thickening. Persons with asbestos-related pleural thickening may have a somewhat higher risk of contracting mesothelioma, a rare cancer of the membrane lining the chest and abdomen.

Pleural thickening can be seen in X-ray films. It is usually limited to the lining of the chest and causes no physical symptoms. Pleural thickening is not considered a disease, but rather an abnormality. It is frequently found alone, with no adverse medical effects and no disability. In the past, many radiologists have not identified or reported asbestos-related pleural thickening.

Medical Treatment

No medical treatment generally is indicated for asbestosis or asbestos-related abnormalities but all work-related cases are referred to a pulmonary specialist at Company expense for evaluation and consultation. The plant physician also strongly advises that smokers with an asbestos-related abnormality or asbestosis stop smoking immediately, since it increases the possibility of asbestos-related disease and lung cancer.

Present medical knowledge suggests that an asbestos-related abnormality is irreversible, but not necessarily one which will develop into asbestosis or one which causes any physical impairment.

Employees and pensioners with an asbestos-related abnormality are offered follow-up examinations annually. These examinations are designed to detect pulmonary disease and to determine whether there is any disability that might require a change in work assignment.

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Benefits to Workers and Families

If any Du Pont work-related illness or impairment develops, Du Pont will accept responsibility for appropriate related medical costs, compensate the employee/pensioner or family as provided for under the Workmen's Compensation laws, and assist the employee or his family in obtaining other benefits to which they may be entitled such as Social Security retirement benefits.

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