

FILE NAME: Asbestos Sacks and Bags (ASB)

DATE: 1981 Aug 23

DOC#: ASB012

DOCUMENT DESCRIPTION: Newspaper Article - South African Stevedores
Risking Health by Handling Shipments of Asbestos

held themselves.
some form of arm's-
reement between indi-
cieties and institutions
more workable way of
ing in residential

Bennet, managing di-
of the Natal Building
also sees the institu-
taking a close look at
ages, but feels that their
ment funds should be
alled into the movement's
by making direct in-
in societies part of
ance companies' pre-
ed investments.
We should have preferen-
access to institutional
and I visualise invest-
on a compulsory basis,
the societies offering a
petitive rate. We need
sources of investment
more rate freedom," he

SALE AG EQUIPMENT

seniors, rejecting manage-
ment offers of 18 percent plus
seven percent on merit.
The SASJ officially declared a
dispute two weeks ago, and
seven newspapers subse-
quently decided to work to
rule, doing no more work than
their contractual obligations
dictated.

Suspended

However, with the re-opening of
negotiations journalists at the
Daily News in Durban yester-
day suspended their work to
rule action while the outcome
of the talks was awaited.
SASJ president Mr John Allen
said last night the journalists
had decided to avoid seeking
the appointment of a concilia-
tion board, if possible, be-
cause of the "external pres-
sures, including those from
the Government, already fac-
ing the industry".
Five SASJ representatives and
four managers had met for
1½ hours yesterday without
arriving at a firm conclusion,
and talks would continue to-
day, he said.
He described the negotiations as
"examining options". — Sapa.

aham Allen/John Dodd

Death i

By BILL GARDINER 23 AUG 1981

SOUTH African stevedores, especially those in Port Elizabeth, are serious riskers of their health by handling shipments of asbestos.

Despite containerisation, at least 30% of asbestos exports are still shipped in pressure-packed bags which are known to puncture and tear, shedding fine — yet highly dangerous — asbestos fibres over dockworkers.

The regional director of the Department of Health in Port Elizabeth, Dr J D Krynauw, — where most asbestos is handled — has ordered an investigation.

"Since this has been brought to our notice, we will certainly look into the matter because this is a health hazard — there is no doubt about that," he said.

A month-long investigation by a newspaper, the Weekend Post, has revealed that asbestos fibres from torn and punctured bags have choked the air in ships' holds.

Stevedores who were interviewed said bags holding asbestos had split while handled in the holds, particularly when workers, unaware of the health hazard, used hooks to move the bags.

On certain occasions, loose bags and strapped bags containing asbestos, would fall into the holds during loading, throwing up asbestos dust and fibres into the air.

They said the stevedore "bosses" did not provide protective clothing or masks nor a change of overalls.

According to medical research into occupational diseases, asbestos fibres — some not even visible to the naked eye — could be carried on the workers' overalls or their skin and, as a result, their families would also be exposed to the risk of getting asbestos-related diseases.

Some of the most dangerous fibres are too small to see and can cause a scarring of the lungs — asbestosis — and various forms of lung cancer.

The Port Elizabeth Stevedoring Labour Supply Company, which recruits dock workers, has refused to discuss the controversial issue of asbestos shipments through the harbour and the serious health hazard facing the stevedores working with inadequately packaged asbestos.

"It is no concern of mine," the manager, Mr C J Wilson, said.

"I supply the labour and the (stevedoring) companies work the ships.

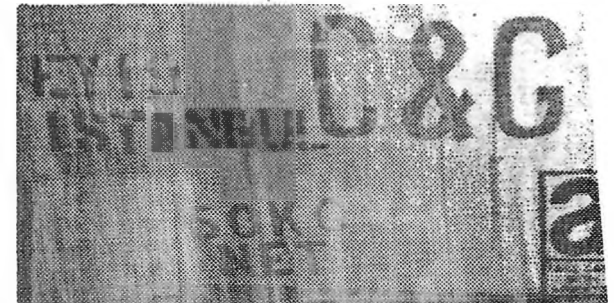
"I wouldn't know if the bags can or cannot tear. I don't handle cargo, I handle people."

He said if the company supplied protective clothing and masks to its workers when they were handling asbestos, he said the company only supplied overalls, boots and helmets.

The provision of gloves, and goggles was the responsibility of the stevedoring companies, which requisitioned labour from the Port Elizabeth Stevedoring Labour Supply Company.

He referred further enquiries to Mr H de Witte, manager of the South African Stevedoring Service Company (Ltd)

THE AIR IN SHIPS HOLDS IS CHOKED WITH AN U



● Pressure-packed asbestos bags with a hook

(SASCO).
Mr De Witte refused to discuss the matter.

He said Mr Wilson had contacted him about the subject and he had no further comment.

"Mr Wilson told you about it. He mentioned it to me. I have no further comment to make and I am going to the telephone down now."

Approached for comment the General Workers' Union (GWU) — which represents the stevedores — said it was aware of the "acute health hazard" from asbestos and matter had already been raised with stevedores.



ONLY... I DON'T WANT
TO BE NEEDDA MILLAY
ANY MORE... I WANT TO
ESCAPE THAT UN-
HAPPY WOMAN...
AND THIS IS
THE ONLY
WAY I KNOW!

THE FIRST, BUT I
SEEM TO BE SITTING
IN HIS REGULAR SEAT!

in a packet-

RDAY EXPRESS



● Stevedores without protective clothing move asbestos on a Port Elizabeth quay

SEEN BUT DEADLY MENACE



arning on the side.

management.

"The work processes are being investigated and they will be improved," a GWU spokesman said.

"Workers are to be medical-

ly examined by doctors and, once the tests have been completed, the question of workers' compensation for asbestos-related diseases will be raised."

Some of the more remote ports had not yet containerised so the asbestos was shipped in pressure-packed bags.

"All of it used to be supplied in bags at one time, but because of containerisation and the health hazard this is not the case now."

The regional director of the Department of Health in Port Elizabeth, Dr J D Krynaur, said although he had not received any formal complaints

about the loading of asbestos at the harbour, he would instruct his staff to look into the matter.

Accidents and isolated incidents of the loading of material which was a danger to health could occur at times, but if it was a regular mishandling of such material "then we will certainly look into it".

"If it is a common occurrence, the health of the community in that area would be in danger."

Political comment in this issue by R A Gibson, headlines and sub-editing by Barry Exter, design by Les Stephenson, all of 171 Main Street, Johannesburg.