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Contractors advised to investigate, consider health facts on asbestos

Concern is growing nationwide for the safety of tradesmen spraying asbestos fireproofing and insulation.

Some medical researchers are compiling evidence that sprayed asbestos can cause cancer in those men who apply the material or work closely with it.

New York, having reviewed statistics compiled by the American Cancer Society and by New York medical researchers, recently imposed stringent regulations which have halted sprayed asbestos fireproofing operations in that city.

New York City's Dept. of Air Resources had prepared new regulations and has issued summonses to three building projects in violation. A fourth asbestos spraying contractor has voluntarily stopped work, thus halting asbestos spraying in the New York area.

California legislators are considering legislative steps and have introduced a bill to prohibit the installation of asbestos inside-air-duct systems in public buildings.

Great Britain, after having compiled information linking pulmonary and gastro-intestinal cancers to asbestos, last year restricted asbestos spraying.

After asbestos fibers have entered the gastro-intestinal [illegible] they remain [illegible] break down, according to some medical reports. Loose fibers and dust particles which are visible during application, along with the millions of microscopic ones, have concerned medical researchers and are said to have strengthened their case against asbestos as a source of cancer and poisoning.

Asbestosis causes a scarring that impairs lungs so severely that they cannot absorb sufficient oxygen.

"As airborne asbestos creates a source of worry, so grows the problem of restrictions causing skyrocketing unit prices in excess of .60c per square foot," says a Chicagoland sprayed-on fireproofing contractor, who for a number of years has utilized a non-asbestos fireproofing material. "The non-asbestos 100 per cent-pure stone fibre used in other fireproofing and insulating applications has, over the years, provided customers with a low unit-price coupled with a high quality, non-asbestos, labor-saving material."

Companies that make spray asbestos are said to be in the process of developing a non-asbestos material consisting of mineral wool and other binders, not identified, at a cost of about 10 per cent more than spray-on asbestos fibers.

Company officials are reported to have developed the new material because of the safety and health controversy arising over asbestos.