



ASBESTOS

Where does asbestos come from?

It is a mineral mined from the earth in much the same ways as other minerals, such as iron, lead, and copper. However, instead of crushing up into dust particles, it divides into millions of fine fibers.

Types:

There are two general types, **Serpentine** and **Amphibole**.

The three most common varieties, **chrysotile**, which is from the serpentine family and **amosite**, and **crocidolite** which is from the amphibole family. Some other types, **anthophyllite**, **actinolite**, and **tremolite** are also from the amphibole family.

Definition of asbestos :

Webster's: a mineral that readily separates into long flexible fibers suitable for use as a noncombustible nonconducting or chemically resistant material.

History:

About 2000 years ago the Greeks used it as wicks in candles and amazed that the wick was not consumed in the flame. They named the mineral "asbesta" meaning unquenchable or inextinguishable.

Marco Polo reported the use of asbestos in gunpowder by the Chinese.

The first large scale use was to insulate steam engines.

The asbestos industry started during the 1870s when the first commercial chrysotile mine opened in Quebec, Canada. The crocidolite variety was first mined in South Africa during the 1890s. Amosite also comes from Africa, but its mining did not begin until 1916.

1918

American and Canadian insurance companies stopped insuring asbestos workers. (12 years before the link between asbestosis and asbestos was confirmed).

1935:

American and British research indicates a link between asbestos and lung cancer.

1972:

New York city banned application of asbestos materials.

1973:

EPA banned use of spray-applied asbestos containing materials.

1978:

EPA issues comprehensive ban on use of friable asbestos materials.

Friable means, easily crumbled or pulverized.

Diseases and deaths associated with asbestos fibers are the principle factors behind "the Asbestos Problem."

The three major respiratory diseases associated with asbestos are asbestosis, lung cancer, and mesothelioma.

1987:

B.A.S.F., Geismar Site starts program looking into asbestos substitutes for gaskets and packing. This is being spearheaded by Maint. Material Reliability Group and Inspection Dept.

All of the above material was drawn from LSUs, "Supervision of Asbestos Abatement Projects" course book, with Mr. George L. Smith Jr.'s permission. Mr. Smith is the Director of Asbestos Training Center.

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