Georgia-Pacific

intracompany memo

AD C.E.B.

to	Mr. C. E. Wilson	location	Portland
from	C. W. Lehnert	location	Tigard
subject	Article on Asbestos	date	February 8 1977

Enclosed is a copy of an article from the January, 1977 issue of "Construction Dimensions" which was sent to Bill Gettel by Windsor Minerals.

C. W. L.

CWL/gvp

Enc.

cc: Mr. D. C. Corkill - Portland (w/ enc.)

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RECEIVED BY

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GYPSUM DIVISION

ASBESTOS: Still Some Problems



Inspections Disclose That Some Contractors Apparently Are Still Using Asbestos-Containing Materials



The asbestos threat to construction industry workers still exists.

Despite the introduction of asbestos-free insulation materials and the existing bans on the use of asbestos-containing spray fireproofing, a quick check by government inspectors last month showed that some contractors are still using materials that exceed the new federal mandates.

The federal asbestos standard of 2 asbestos fibers, which are longer than 5 micrometers, per cubic centimeter of air on an 8-hour time-weighted average went into effect July 1, 1976.

The major manufacturers have introduced wallboard finishing compounds, and spackle, which are asbestos free. But inspection showed that some contractors are still using materials that contain significant amounts of chrysotile asbestos. This is released into the air as dust either during the dry mixing of these compounds or during sanding.

Shortly after World War II, drywall taping compounds came into widespread use. The materials used at the construction site were, until fairly recently, creating large clouds of dust.

Since the cancer scare and governmental initiatives to reduce the asbestos exposure, many contractors have switched to premixed compounds.

What's Supplied

The advantage of switching, though, depends on the contractor and what he supplies his workmen. There are some contractors who still find a need to use the dry-mix brands.

Mixing of asbestos containing spackle material can create dust concentrations that exceed the current asbestos standard by more than ten times.

But even the use of ready-mixed compounds leaves the problem of dust. It's produced when the dried compound is sanded, prior to painting.

Work habits vary. Tapers, or their apprentices, do their own sanding in some sections of the country. In others, the painters are left to finish the job. The sanding is often done while other men are working in the same room or area.

Samples Taken

To determine the level of exposure, the Environmental Sciences Laboratory last year took air samples at selected job sites in New York City while tapers were working.

Personal samples taken during pole sanding ranged from 1.2 fibers per milliliter (f/ml) to 19.3 f/ml; in an adjacent room, at a distance of 25 feet from the sander, a level of 8.8 f/ml was found.

Hand sanding levels ranged from 1.3 to 16.9 f/ml in the breathing zone of the workers, and a high of 7.1 f/ml was taken in an adjacent room, at a distance of 15 feet.

A breathing zone sample taken during dry mixing was found to contain 59 f/ml, though a 15-minute lapse dropped the level to 0.5 f/ml.

Considerable quantities of settled dust were stirred up after sanding operations. Thirty-five minutes after sweeping at the site of the sanding, a fiber concentration of 26.4 f/ml was obtained.

In view of these findings, the use of respiratory protection and careful clean-up in order to reduce the risk of inhaling asbestos fibers is clearly warranted.

A respirator should be worn by sanders and by any other workers who must be in adjacent areas while this work is in progress. Where possible, other workers should be instructed to wait to allow the dust to settle.

A vacuum is preferred for clean-up, as soon as the dust is settled. To further minimize dust clouds, the floor should be dampened when a vacuum is not used and sweeping is the only alternative. The sweeper should wear a mask.

While sanding may represent only a small part of the construction activity its danger should not be minimized. Even when exposure duration is short, the cumulative effect of repeated short-term exposures to measurable concentrations of asbestos fibers can be serious.

A medical study of 69 drywall tapers in New York revealed the dangers of continued exposure. Of the group of 69, some two-thirds had an exposure of 10 years duration and 61 were smokers or ex-smokers. Yet, X-ray abnormalities characteristic of asbestos exposure were found in 37 out of 63 films.

Again, the major manufacturers have developed new formulations that are free of asbestos. Contractors are encouraged to patronize the products of these suppliers. □