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MAN-MADE MINERAL FIBERS VS. ASBESTOS

Our literature-searching process shows that there is no consistent body of information which would mandate a clear choice in selecting a risk-free fiber for insulation. At present, there is insufficient test information to permit such a selection. Unfortunately, there is no uniform consensus on the mechanism of fiber fibrosis and carcinogenesis. The long-term empirical tests which could support a provisional course of action have not been run.

A summation of this state-of-the-art was attempted in the "World Symposium on Asbestos" held in Montreal beginning May 25, 1982. Some highlights are noted below.

The provisional conclusion of this meeting suggests that all mineral fibers (natural or man-made) should be handled with great care. It is reasonable to foresee that all these fibers will be regulated and not prohibited.

Conference Highlights

- The key-note speaker, G. Atherly (Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety), emphasized that "a complex scientific question has been approached through less than adequate science and the whole has been conditioned by economic and political factors."
- E. van der Rest, Asbestos International Association, advocated controlled use of asbestos with an industry responsibility to ensure no socially unacceptable risk. (Including an international adoption of 2 fibers/cm³ limit).

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