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ASBESTOS RULINGS HELD INADEQUATE

Cancer Authority Says Many Workers Face Death

By FELIX BELAIR Jr.
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, June 12—An authority on asbestos-caused cancer said today that tens of thousands of workers exposed to asbestos would die because of inadequate regulations issued by the Government's Occupational Safety and Health Administration.

The prediction was made by Dr. Irving Selikoff of Mount Sinai Hospital in New York, in a report to a meeting of the industrial union department of the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations at the organization's headquarters here.

Dr. Selikoff said that, if the Federal agency showed the same disregard for essential safeguards and precautions in setting standards for other toxic substances as it demonstrated in the asbestos regulations, "we face an unparalleled disaster to the working people in our country."

"The regulations speak blandly of five fibers per milliliter [as] 'standard' but neglect to add that a working man inhales from four to eight million milliliters in an eight-hour day" he said. A milliliter, or cubic centimeter, holds about a thimbleful of air.

In a direct reference to Assistant Secretary of Labor George C. Guenther, who heads the safety agency, Dr. Selikoff said, "Mr. Guenther orders that workers exposed to asbestos in any trade are required to work under conditions which permit them to inhale 20 million or even 30 million fibers in a working day."

Mr. Guenther made this statement after hearing of the doctor's charges: "Dr. Selikoff has chosen to overdramatize the matter. There is no question that exposure to asbestos is most hazardous."

"We believe," he said, "that the new standards will provide substantial and real protection for exposed workers and that they provide for reductions in levels of asbestos exposure that are reasonable and, in our judgment, based on tests from many quarters."

The asbestos standard issued by the Labor Department agency last week provided for an exposure limit of 2 fibers per cubic centimeter of air but said the present emergency standard of 5 fibers would continue until July, 1976. It also provided a maximum exposure limit of 10 fibers per cubic centimeter for an eight-hour day.

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