"Since the recognition of asbestosis 72 years ago, the disease has been widely studied the world over, from the mines of South Africa to the mills of Quebec. Today experts believe that asbestosis is one of the most debilitating of the pneumoconioses—lung diseases caused by dust inhalation."

sheets, brake linings, boiler blankets, building materials and appliance cords.

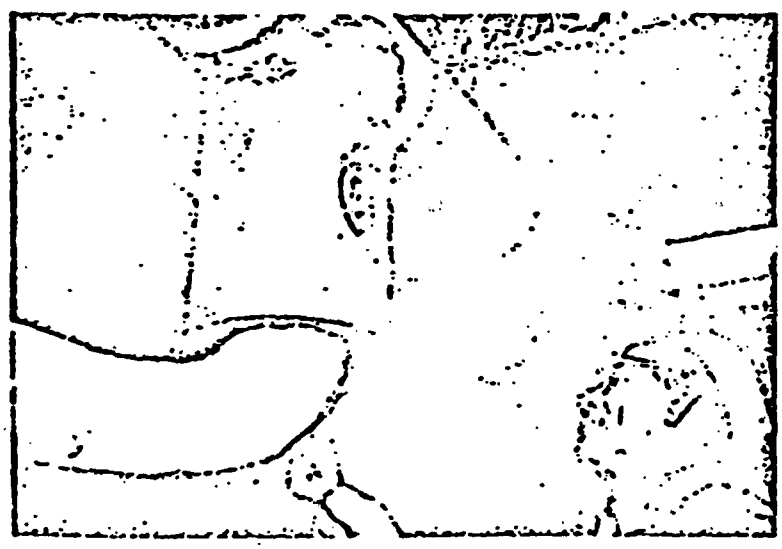
Plasterers who spray an asbestos mix on the steel foundations of buildings have heavy exposures to asbestos. A thermal insulation and fireproofing agent, the asbestos mix prevents the steel from buckling in case of fire. Plasterers can apply it without interrupting construction activities, and the asbestos mixture hardens in eight hours without cracking or shrinking. Not only steel buildings, but ships and boats are treated in this manner.

Now that asbestos has been recognized as a major health hazard, the alarming facts about this practice are being reviewed. Three million pounds of the fireproofing mixture, 30 percent of which is chrysotile asbestos, was sprayed in 1970. Twenty-five percent of the material sprayed does not adhere to the steel, but goes directly into the atmosphere. The plasterers manning the spray guns, as well as the construction workers toiling near-by, inhale excessive amounts of asbestos during this operation—up to 50 million fibers in an eight hour day. But the hazard does not end with construction. A large amount of asbestos is expected to be set free during demolition of the buildings and ships treated in this manner.

Asbestos spraying has been banned in some cities, but continues unabated in others. The use of alternate methods of application—trowelling a wet mixture of asbestos on the foundation or wrapping insulation around the steel in the form of blankets—is being encouraged to reduce the hazard.

Brake mechanics must also cope with significant levels of airborne asbestos. Valuable because of its resistance to heat and its ability to withstand abrasive force, chrysotile asbestos makes up 50 percent of brake lining material. However, the friction breaks asbestos fibers away from the fabric. Many mechanics remove the asbestos fibers that have accumulated around the brake drums and assemblies with a compressed air hose. This produces a cloud of asbestos dust around the mechanic and anyone in his working area. Alternate cleaning methods are needed; for example, a vacuum cleaning device reduced the hazard in recent tests in England.

Insulation workers are the largest single occupational group to handle asbestos on the job. Their



Right: Trowelling a wet asbestos mix on pipes for insulation purposes effectively reduces the hazards.