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35-year-old employee of Bendix becomes 13th victim of asbestos

WINDSOR (CP) — A 35-year-old man has become the 13th victim to die of an asbestos-related cancer after working at one of the two Windsor plants of Bendix Corp., the man's union representative and closest friend says.

Tommy Dunn, who worked for almost 12 years in the welding department of one of the plants, died on Saturday.

Doctors operated on Mr. Dunn in December, 1979, for mesothelioma, a rare form of inoperable cancer linked to asbestos fibres. They discovered two tumors in an advanced stage in his lung and gave him a maximum of two years to live.

Rick Byrne, former plant chairman for Local 195 of the United Auto Workers, who worked with Mr. Dunn for 11 years, and other union negotiators have taken the cases of 19 Bendix workers to the Workmen's Compensation Board.

Thirteen of the 19, including Mr. Dunn, have died of asbestos-related diseases.

Mr. Byrne said Mr. Dunn asked him to check with the board to see whether he was eligible for benefits. After long negotiations, the board decided Mr. Dunn's illness made him suitable for compensation and he received payment retroactive to November, 1979.

However, Bendix, which uses asbestos in the manufacture of automotive brake linings, has never acknowledged that it was directly responsible for Mr. Dunn's illness. Mr. Byrne said Mr. Dunn was one of those concerned that Bendix did not completely comply with a 1966 Government request to clean up its plants.

"They were supposed to clean it up in 1966 and Tommy didn't know why they didn't clean it up."

Now, however, Mr. Byrne said that although the union has made some headway, negotiations will be tougher because Bendix closed its two Windsor plants last August.

"What can you change now — they're gone."