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# MEMORANDUM

TO: Messrs. T. Dougherty
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N. J. Setter
R. T. Larkin

DATE: March 22, 1966

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SUBJECT: Asbestos - Toxicology

Gentlemen:

Early in March the "New York Times" and the "Herald Tribune", reporting the establishment of a new environmental health laboratory at Mt. Sinai Hospital (New York City), revived some publicity (copy attached) in regard to Asbestos dust as a health hazard. We understand that a few newspapers in other cities picked it up.

"Out of context" reporting leads to erroneous conclusions, and this is no exception. Nevertheless, we should reckon that such a commentary will recur, and all of us should use the tool we now have at our disposal to make certain our customers are acquainted with the facts:

1. You have copies of Dr. Dernehl's "Asbestos Toxicology Report." Additional copies are enclosed. Use these, and call particular attention to Dr. Dernehl's statements in regard to "Threshold Limit Value" for asbestos. Control of asbestos dust exposure is necessary, as is control of exposure to any of a variety of dusty operations.

2. Union Carbide pellets offer a clear-cut means of handling asbestos under exceptionally low dust conditions.

3. No work yet conducted or published presents, nor professes to present, incontrovertible proof of a relationship between cancer and asbestos. Some publications have referred to the association of deleterious organic compounds, among them jute oils from jute sacking material, and 3,4 benzo(a) pyrene. We do not use jute bags. Further, we are

analyzing random samples of our product, and expect shortly to prove the absence of any polycyclic aromatics.

Your pelleted asbestos affords customers the best means of avoiding dust hazards. Make this clear.

Very truly yours,

A.E.Pufahl/dh

Enclosures

# Asbestos Dust Called a Hazard To at Least One-Fourth of U.S.

By JANE E. BRODY

Asbestos dust, which has already been connected with the development of fatal cancer in one-half of asbestos workers, may be a potential health hazard for one-quarter of the population or more, it was reported yesterday.

This preliminary finding was described by Dr. Irving J. Selikoff in announcing the establishment of an environmental health laboratory at Mount Sinai Hospital. The laboratory will further investigate the dangers to man of asbestos and other environmental contaminants.

Dr. Selikoff said the link between cancer and asbestos had led him to suspect that other mineral dusts that contaminate both urban and rural air might create medical hazards for the public.

The new laboratory will be headed by Dr. Selikoff who, with Dr. Jacob Churg, found that asbestos workers eventually showed [illegible] to seven times the normal death rate from lung cancer and three times the normal death rate from cancer of the stomach, colon and rectum.

### Other Workers Affected

Dr. Selikoff noted that the dangers of exposure to asbestos dust were not limited to those who work directly with this ubiquitous insulator and filler material. The dangers, he said, extend to workers in "contiguous trades," such as other construction workers and their families.

According to the findings of three recent limited studies, the dangers might extend to the general population. The studies, which involved autopsies on 1,100 persons in three cities, showed that 25 per cent of the people had asbestos lodged in their lungs.

Dr. Selikoff explained that the studies had used a "crude technique" that disclosed only those asbestos fibers that had become coated by an iron-rich material while lodged in the lungs. A more refined technique now shows that many persons harbor noncoated asbestos fibers as well, he said.

### New Study Started

Dr. Selikoff and his colleagues at the new laboratory have started a three-year study in which they will:

¶Examine, with the deceased's family's approval, the lung tissue of the from 3,000 to 4,000 persons expected to die in the next two years at Mount Sinai, Elmhurst Hospital and Veterans Hospital in the Bronx. The doctors will look for uncoated as well as coated asbestos fibers in the tissues.

¶Look for correlations between the causes of death and the presence of asbestos fibers in lung tissue.

¶Determine the occupational history of the deceased and their relatives and other pertinent background information.

Asbestos is a fibrous mineral highly valued for its noncorrosive and long-wearing properties. In addition to its common use as a fireproof material, Dr. Selikoff said, asbestos makes up about 50 per cent of asphalt tile and is used in dental cement, brake linings, plastics, beer filters, gas masks and paper. Until last year, some schools used asbestos dust instead of sand for children to play in.

# Study Links Asbestos To Cancer

By Earl Ubell
*Science Editor*

Scientists have known for a long time that asbestos was bad for your lungs. Now a study of New York City workers, both roofers and insulation blowers, reveals that exposure to the mineral sends lung-cancer death rates skyrocketing.

The figures—gathered by doctors at Mount Sinai Hospital—show that such workers have eight times the lung-cancer death rate as would be expected in a non-exposed population.

More suprisingly, the studies reveal that such workers run four times the risk of getting cancer in other parts of the body, with cancer of the colon particularly singled out. For all other diseases, the insulation workers have the same death rate as the rest of the population.

These findings were emphasized yesterday by Dr. Irving J. Selikoff, head of Mt. Sinai's Division of Environmental Medicine, on the occasion of the establishment of an environmental health laboratory in the hospital. The laboratory has received grants totaling $324,000 from the United States Public Health Service and the New York City Health Research Council.

Dr. Selikoff also pointed out that cigarette smoking seems to heighten the effects of the asbestos. Among 130 men exposed to asbestos 20 years or more who were nonsmokers, he found one lung-cancer death among 310 smokers, 21 such deaths.

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