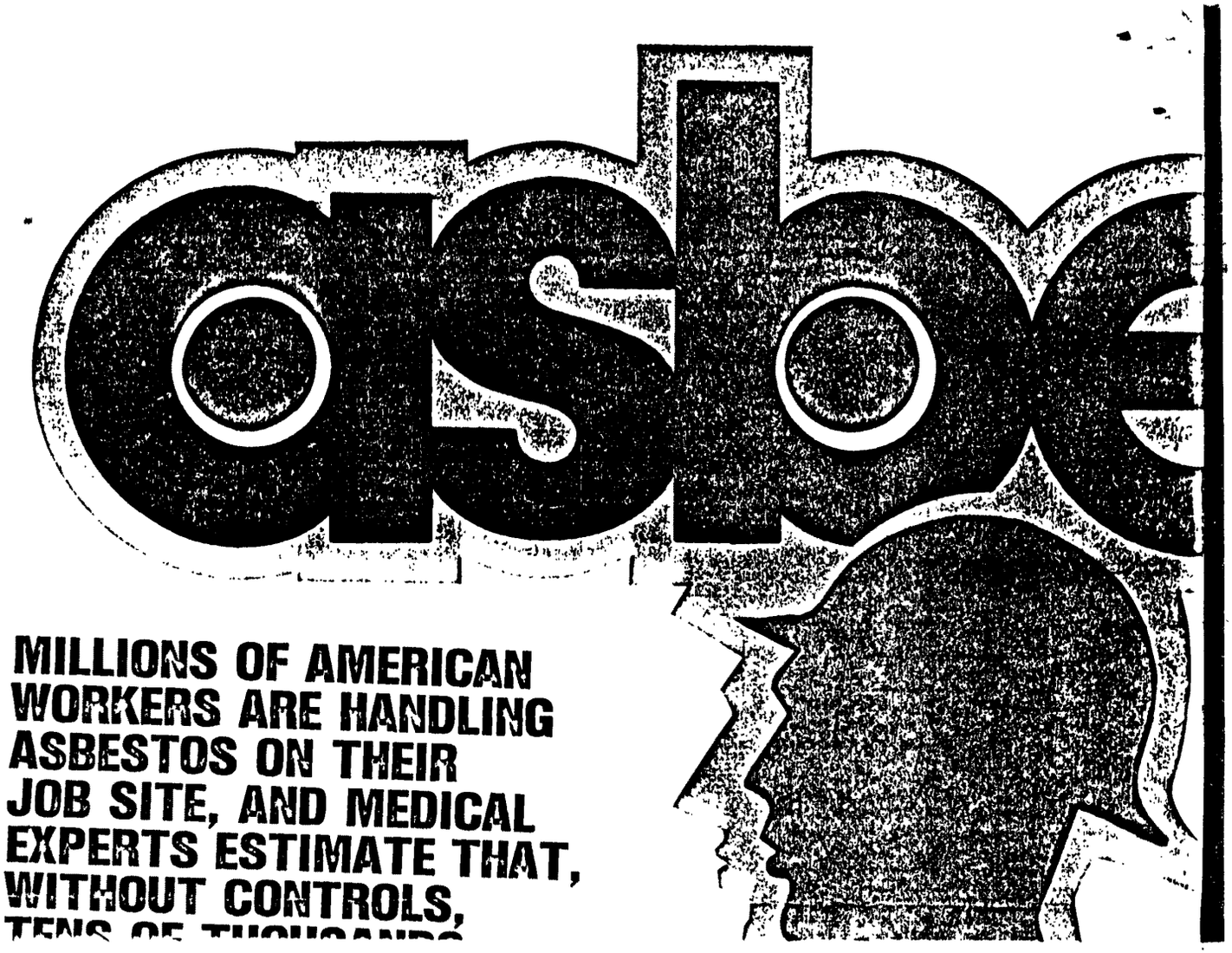
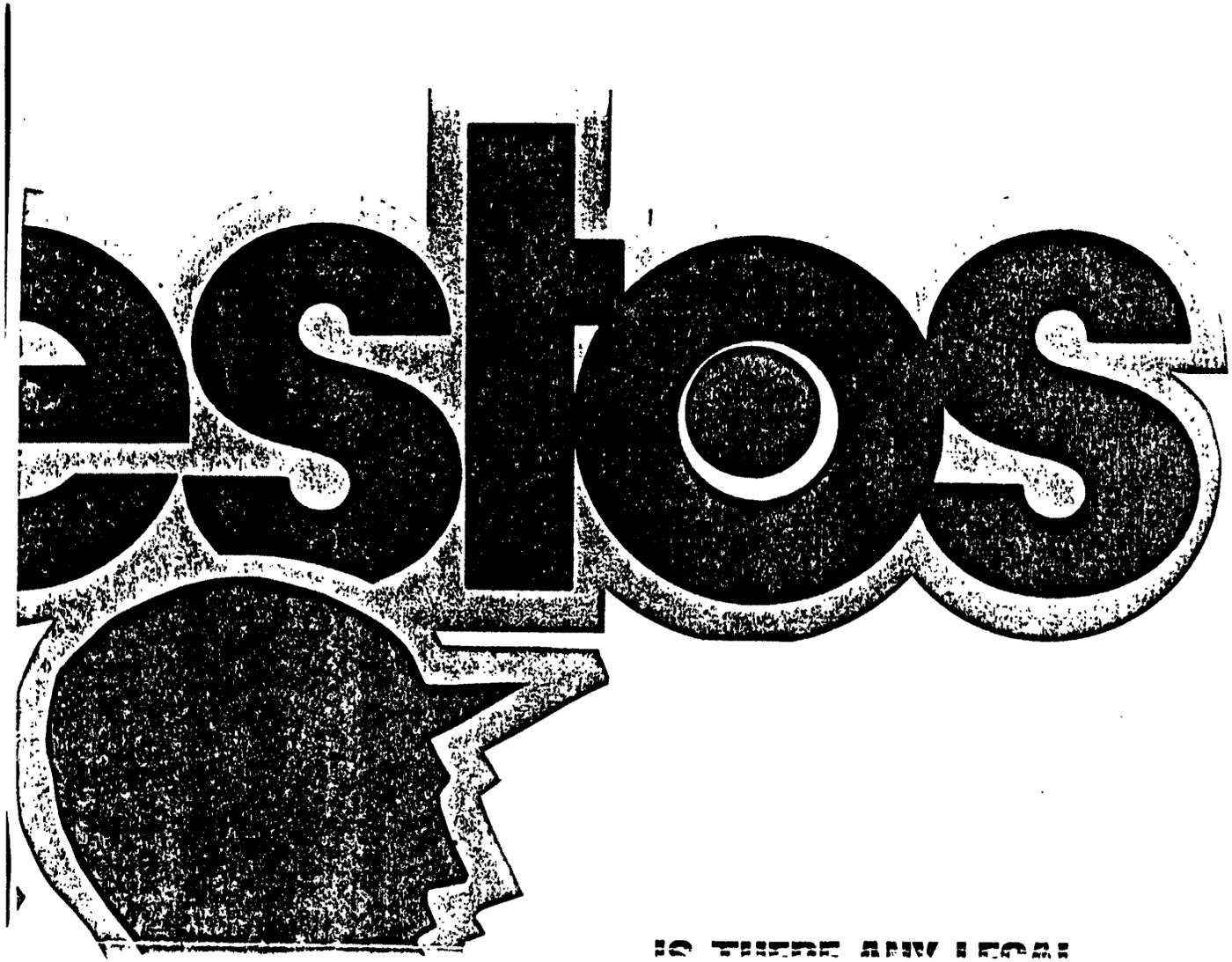
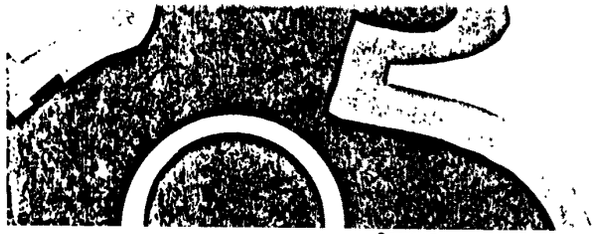



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IS THERE ANY LEGAL

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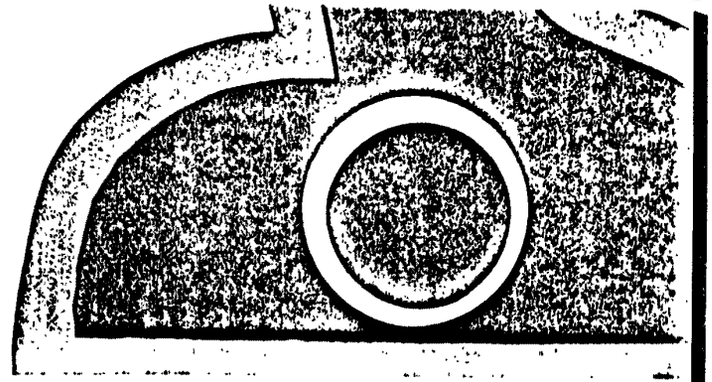


# ASBESTOS EXPOSURE ON THE JOB?

In 1970, workers and their repre-

YES

OF WORKERS WILL DIE OF CANCER DURING THE NEXT HALF CENTURY.



Asbestos has been called the "miracle mineral." Its unique ability to resist fire and acid have made asbestos an indispensable industrial substance. Used in everything from potholders to brake linings, this fibrous mineral is found virtually everywhere in the environment.

But asbestos is as deadly as it is valuable. When it is separated from rock, asbestos is fluffy and fibrous, and can be inhaled by workers. Its widespread industrial use means that millions of American workers are exposed to asbestos every day on the job. Medical experts estimate that tens of thousands of these workers will die from asbestos-related cancers during the next 50 years. Many thousands more will suffer disabling lung disease. Some scientists are predicting an asbestos epidemic on the same scale as the bubonic plague which killed millions during the middle ages.

And workers are not the only ones at risk of asbestos disease. Family members of workers may die from asbestos carried home on work clothing. For in many cases, workers do not even know they are handling asbestos. Improper labeling of as-

2) the lack of oxygen and hard breathing put a strain on the heart, which can lead to heart failure.

The entire process is the disease called *"asbestosis."* (Asbestosis is *not* the same thing as cancer, although both asbestosis and cancer are caused by asbestos exposure.) Once the process of scarring starts in asbestosis, it is irreversible. *There is no treatment which can make the lung as healthy as it was before.* The fibrosis is progressive, and will continue to develop. If it is in an advanced stage, it will continue even if you completely remove yourself from further exposure. The disease is incurable. The only known treatment for asbestosis is to prevent it in the first place.

## EARLY WARNING SIGNS OF ASBESTOSIS: WHAT TO LOOK FOR

A worker suffering from asbestosis will

DAMPED

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## ARE THERE ANY SAFE FORMS OF ASBESTOS?

**No**

Every kind of asbestos causes cancer, and every kind of asbestos can cause asbestosis. There are five major types of asbestos: chrysotile (white asbestos, the most common kind), crocidolite (blue asbestos), amosite, anthrophyllite, and tremolite. All kinds of asbestos—under these names or any other brand names—cause cancer. *There is no safe kind of asbestos.*

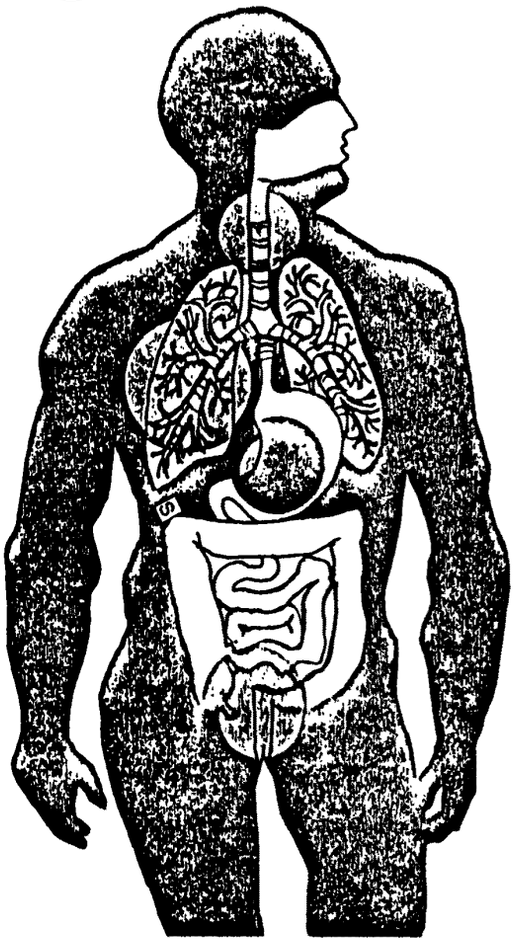
## HOW DOES ASBESTOS MAKE YOU SICK? WHAT IS ASBESTOSIS?

Asbestos fibers float in the air and you inhale them. When they lodge in the lung, these fibers—even fibers so small that they are invisible—irritate the lung. This irritation sets up a reaction, an inflammation (like a sore when you cut your finger) in the small air tubes and sacs of the lung. As the inflammation heals, it leaves scar tissue, called fibrosis.

This causes two things:

1)it thickens the lining of the air sacs (alveoli) so that it is hard for oxygen to pass from the air into your bloodstream. Slowly, as the scarring progresses, the worker begins to suffocate—even though air can be breathed in, it doesn't get into the blood.

cancer



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practices demanded by law for the handling of asbestos.

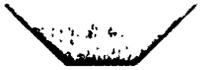
## WHO IS EXPOSED TO ASBESTOS?




Asbestos is found in every home and every factory. It has more than 3000 commerical applications. Half a million people work directly with asbestos, and millions more are exposed on their job sites, in public schools and offices. You have to assume there is asbestos exposure in your workplace until you are sure there is not—it is your responsibility to examine your workplace first, and to demand that your employer inform you of all uses of asbestos on the job site.

In some cases, you will not be able to recognize the asbestos, because the fibers hang suspended—invisible—in the air. Although asbestos is often bonded or woven for industrial uses, the mats and sheets wear down with time, releasing the fibers into the air. Welders, for example, use asbestos "protective" blankets, which protect them from flying sparks. At the same time the workers are surrounded with flying asbestos fibers as the blankets crack and wear with use. Office workers are at risk because asbestos-lined ventilation systems release fibers into the air system. Pipe fitters are exposed because most piping is protected with asbestos.

Even if you do not recognize asbestos-containing materials in your workplace, you cannot assume that you are not exposed to asbestos. You should find out the substances you work with—and then determine if



shortness of breath. There may be a dry cough, and sometimes pain in the upper chest or back. As the ability to breathe is limited, the fingers and toes become "clubbed," —rounded, with flattened nails. This is a sign of decreased oxygen reaching the blood. Because these are vague symptons, it is easy for doctors to blame them on other causes instead of asbestos for a long time, as the disease gets worse, so early diagnosis is important.

All workers exposed to asbestos on the job must have a regular program of medical testing provided by the employer under the OSHA Asbestos Standard. This program (which is required by law) includes a personal and work history, a physical examination, chest x-rays, and pulmonary function tests (to test how well you can breathe) *every year.* These tests will not prevent you from getting asbestosis, but they will warn you in the early stages of the disease.

## WHAT KIND OF CANCER DOES ASBESTOS CAUSE?

The most serious hazard of exposure to asbestos is cancer—and it takes less exposure to asbestos to cause cancer than to cause asbestosis. Two kinds of cancer, lung cancer and mesothelioma, are very strongly related to asbestos exposure. In addition to these, asbestos workers also show increased deaths from cancer of the stomach, esophagus, and bowel. *Lung cancer* caused by asbestos exposure is the same kind of cancer as that caused by smoking. It is hard to diagnose early, it spreads rapidly and can rarely be cured. Most people who are found to

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are roughly 7 times higher for workers exposed to asbestos, and deaths from gastrointestinal cancer are roughly 3 times higher. Mesothelioma is almost never found in persons who have not been exposed to asbestos, yet in some studies of asbestos workers, more than 10% of the deaths are due to mesothelioma.

If you work with asbestos and smoke too, your chances of getting lung cancer are increased because of a 'cooperation' between the asbestos and cigarette smoke, called *synergism*. But even if you don't smoke, you still have a very high chance of getting lung cancer. Smoking has not been shown to affect the other kinds of cancer which asbestos can cause.

## WHAT IF I ONLY WORK WITH ASBESTOS FOR A SHORT TIME? WHAT IS THE "20 YEAR RULE"?

Even if you are only exposed to asbestos for a few days, you may be in danger. Just one month of working with asbestos can double your chances of getting cancer. However, cancer takes many years to develop—it takes most people about 20 years from the time of first exposure to asbestos to develop cancer. This is the "20 year rule," also called the *latent* period. It does not mean that you have to be exposed for 20 years in order to get sick; it only means that these diseases take many years to develop. Many workers get sick years after they have left the job, and may not even remember that they were exposed to asbestos, or when.

emergencies and while controls are being put in. No employee may be assigned to a task requiring a respirator if the physician determines that the employee will be unable to function normally when wearing a respirator or that the safety or health of the employee or of other employees will be impaired by the use of a respirator. Where respirators are used, the standard recommends "rotation of personnel."

CLOTHING: The employer must provide special clothing, change rooms, clothes lockers, and laundering.

MONITORING: This is done with a dust sampler. Every employer using asbestos shall have initially monitored the exposure of the employees by December 7, 1972. Therefore, your workplace should have been monitored at least once. If the exposure is found to exceed the standard, the employer must then monitor at least once every 6 months.

ACCESS TO MONITORING DATA: Affected employees, or their representative, shall be given a reasonable opportunity to observe any monitoring required . . . and shall have access to the records thereof. When employees are exposed to excessive concentrations, they must be told what corrective actions are being taken.

SIGNS: Caution signs must be posted in plants and labels attached to asbestos materials.

MEDICAL EXAMINATIONS: Physical examinations including a 14"x17" chest X-Ray, pulmonary function tests, and a history, shall be given at preplacement, then each year, and at termination. These examinations shall be provided by the employer, and the physician who conducts the examination *must report* the results to the employer. Employees have access to this medical data only through their physician.

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## IF I WORK WITH ASBESTOS?

Yes. If you are bringing asbestos fibers home with you—on your clothes, in your hair, in your lunchbox—this endangers your family. In one study, 1/3 of the asbestos workers' family members had abnormal chest x-rays from scarring and thickening of the chest lining (pleural membrane) 30 years *after* their exposure at home. Cases of mesothelioma are known to have happened after as little as 1 month's contact with a family member carrying asbestos fiber home with him. Your family is also in danger of asbestos-caused diseases if the mine or plant where you work is discharging asbestos fibers into the air of your community. Increased rates of asbestosis, lung cancer, and mesothelioma have all been found in people living near mines and plants



asbestos standard, discuss the problem with other workers, your union representative, if any, and your employer. **If necessary, contact OSHA. Look in your phone book under "United States Government, Department of Labor, Occupational Safety and Health Administration," or write to OSHA, 3rd and Constitution Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20210.**

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This poster was prepared by the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers (OCAW) International Union, AFL-CIO-CLC. It was designed by Joseph Jacobs, written by Molly Coye, M.D., and produced by Dorothy Cochrane.

Additional copies are available at OSHA offices. (OSHA No. 3038).

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