ASBESTOS

PLAINTIFF'S EXHIBIT

UC-2943

ASBESTOS is a fibrous mineral. There are several different kinds of asbestos, all of them dangerous. Asbestos is used in more than 3,000 products and 3 million workers in the U.S. are or have been exposed to it on the job, especially insulation, paper and wallboard, shop repair and construction workers. Those who live and work in buildings with asbestos insulation, pipe linings or fire proofing are also endangered. Office workers, for instance, breathe in dust and fibers that get into the air through ventilating systems. Textile workers who work with yarns, tapes, felt, braid and wire coverings face asbestos exposure.

FRICTION products account for most domestic asbestos manufacturing. They have found wherever motion must be controlled, from railroad cars to tape recorders, but their most important commercial use is in automobile brake and clutch linings.

ASBESTOS fibers are usually extremely tiny; there can be a million of them in a single inch. They are heatproof, fireproof and resistant to most chemicals and are therefore indestructible. Asbestos fibers float in the air like water vapor, stick to clothing are are easily inhaled and swallowed.

HEALTH THREATS FROM ASBESTOS

ASBESTOSIS — When breathed in, the needle-like tiny asbestos fibers are trapped in the lower lungs. Scar tissue forms around them, slowly spreading throughout the lungs. After 10 to 30 years, the scars become thick and stiff making it harder and harder to breathe. The earliest signs of asbestosis are shortness of breathe, tiring easily and difficulty in climbing stairs. If detected early enough, this disease can be arrested.

MESOTHELIOMA

This once rare form of cancer is now showing up more and more frequently. It attacks the linings of the chest and abdomen & is always fatal. Mesothelioma can develop even from a short-term or low exposure to asbestos, or from washing and handling the clothing of asbestos workers or breathing in the air around factories or construction sites where asbestos is used.

CANCER — Asbestos workers have a high rate of lung cancer. Smoking increases the danger of getting some form of this usually fatal disease, but the principal cause is exposure to asbestos.

Evidence is increasing that exposure to asbestos can also cause throat cancer, cancer of the esophagus, stomach, colon (large intestine), and rectum.

MANY illnesses caused by exposure to asbestos cannot be cured, partly because it takes 10 to 30 or more years before they show up. Although asbestos-related disease usually comes from long-term exposure, many workers, members of their families and neighbors in the area where the asbestos is being worked with, get sick after only a short exposure period.

Early symptoms that should be checked up on immediately are:

(1) shortness of breath
(2) cough or change in cough pattern,
(3) coughing up blood
(4) pain in chest/abdomen,
(5) hoarseness, or trouble in swallowing,
(6) rapid, large weight loss

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LEGAL LIMITS: THE OSHA STANDARD

Asbestos was the first hazardous substance the Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA) regulated. In 1972, OSHA set a legal exposure limit of 2 fibers per cubic centimeters of air averaged over an 8-hour day. Regulated fibers have to be no more than 5 microns long. (A micron is a millionth of a meter; a meter is about 39"). Industry delayed this standard until 1976, claiming the technology didn't exist to comply with it.

The 2-fiber standard, still in effect, is useful at best only to prevent asbestosis. A worker will inhale 8 million cubic feet of air during a work day. The current limit permits him or her to breathe in up to 16 million asbestos fibers. Even the Industry-oriented American Conference of Government & Industrial Hygienists proposed a standard of 0.5 fibers. NIOSH (National Institute of Occupational Safety & Health) recently published a proposal to lower the limit to 0.1 fibers per cubic centimeter of air.

WORK PRACTICES

The OSHA standard includes the following engineering controls:

a. Monitoring: Companies must regularly check the air for asbestos levels. Monitoring should be done near the work areas, and workers must have access to all records.

b. Work Practices: Companies must use work practices designed to keep asbestos out of workplace air, such as adequate ventilation, wet methods, isolation &/or enclosure of processes.

c. Labeling: All materials containing asbestos must be clearly labeled. All work areas where asbestos is used must be clearly posted with signs.

d. Clothing: The company must provide special overalls, gloves, head and foot covering for all asbestos workers and is responsible for seeing to it that work clothes are clean. Changing rooms and showers must be provided. Pure air respirators must be available for every worker.

e. Medical Exam: The company must provide each worker with a pre-employment physical and with annual examinations after work begins. The physical must include a full chest-exray, a lung function test and a medical history of the worker. Workers have the right to see all their medical records and under the new OSHA regulation, past workers as well as those now working and their representatives, have the right to see the company log which gives details about work exposure and illnesses and injuries for each worker.

CONTROL MEASURES

The best protection against asbestos disease is to make sure NO fibers get into the air workers breathe. OSHA work practices are not enough. Good exhaust ventilation properly maintained, wetting down asbestos before cutting, mixing, or grinding it, collecting loose dirt regularly with good vacuum cleaners are some work practices that should be aimed for. Workers near areas where asbestos is used should also be protected. Respirators should not be used as a subistitute for other controls. Where dust is heavy and exposure prolonged, certain types of masks tend to fall off and when put on again, the surface directly covering the mouth is full of fibers. Some masks cause facial blisters or don't fit over glasses. Most are bad for workers with sinus trouble or any decreased lung capacity. No worker with an asbestos related disease should lose any rights, pay or any other benefits because of disability, job transfer, etc.

Union Carbide trial exhibit UC-2943: Untitled Fact Sheet on Asbestos Health Threats and the OSHA Standard Published by AsbestosClaims.Law
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