ASBESTOS

(Data in thousand metric tons, unless otherwise noted)

Domestic Production and Use: One firm in California accounted for 100% of domestic production. Asbestos was consumed in roofing products, 71%; gaskets, 18%; friction products, 5%; and other, 6%.

Salient Statistics—United States:	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002[e]
Production (sales), mine	6	7	5	5	3
Imports for consumption	16	16	15	13	9
Exports[1]	18	22	19	22	8
Shipments from Government stockpile excesses	3	5	—	—	—
Consumption, estimated	16	16	15	13	9
Price, average value, dollars per ton[2]	210	210	210	160	160
Stocks, producer, yearend	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Employment, mine and mill, number	25	20	19	15	15
Net import reliance[3] as a percentage of estimated consumption	100	100	100	100	100

Recycling: Insignificant.

Import Sources (1998-2001): Canada, 96%; and other, 4%.

Tariff: Item	Number	Normal Trade Relations 12/31/02
Asbestos	2524.00.0000	Free.

Depletion Allowance: 22% (Domestic), 10% (Foreign).

Government Stockpile: None

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ASBESTOS

Events, Trends, and Issues: The asbestos industry continues to be affected by liability issues and public opposition to the use of asbestos. In the United States, the last domestic asbestos mine closed in response to declining overseas markets. This marks the end of more than 120 years of continuous asbestos production in the United States. Proposed legislation in Congress (Senate bill 2641) to ban the use of asbestos in the United States is under review in the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works. In Canada, Jeffrey Mine Inc. shut down its mining operation in response to declining prices and markets.

Shipments of asbestos declined to 3,000 tons in 2002 from 5,000 tons in 2001. Imports and exports declined by 31% and 64%, respectively, from those of 2001. Estimated consumption decreased by 31% to 9,000 tons in 2002. Some reported exports were likely to have been reexports, asbestos-containing products, or nonasbestos products. Actual exports of asbestos fiber were estimated to be approximately 3,000 tons. All the asbestos used in the United States was chrysotile. Canada remained the largest supplier of asbestos for domestic consumption.

World Mine Production, Reserves, and Reserve Base:

	Mine production		Reserves[4]	Reserve base[4]
	2001	2002[e]		
United States	5	3	Small	Large
Brazil	170	170	Moderate	Moderate
Canada	340	340	Large	Large
China	360	360	Large	Large
Kazakhstan	235	235	Large	Large
Russia	750	750	Large	Large
South Africa	16	14	Small	Moderate
Zimbabwe	120	120	Moderate	Moderate
Other countries	54	50	Moderate	Large
World total (may be rounded)	2,050	2,040	Large	Large

World Resources: The world has 200 million tons of identified resources and an additional 45 million tons classified as hypothetical resources. The U.S. resources are large, but are composed mostly of short fibers.

Substitutes: Numerous materials substitute for asbestos in products. The substitutes include calcium silicate; carbon fiber; cellulose fiber; ceramic fiber; glass fiber; steel fiber; wollastonite; and several organic fibers, such as aramid, polyethylene, polypropylene, and polytetrafluoroethylene. Several nonfibrous minerals were considered to be possible asbestos substitutes for products in which the reinforcement properties of fibers were not required. No single substitute was as versatile as asbestos.

[e]Estimated. NA Not available. — Zero.

[1]Probably includes nonasbestos materials and reexports.

[2]Average price for Group 7 Canadian chrysotile, ex-mine.

[3]Defined as imports - exports + adjustments for Government and industry stock changes. Most domestic production is exported; imports account for almost all domestic consumption.

[4]See Appendix C for definitions.

U.S. Geological Survey, Mineral Commodity Summaries, January 2003