ASBESTOS

(Data in thousand metric tons unless otherwise noted)

Domestic Production and Use: There has been no asbestos mining in the United States since 2002, so the United States is totally dependent on imports to meet manufacturing needs. Asbestos consumption in the United States was estimated to be 55% for roofing products, 26% for coatings and compounds, and 19% for other applications.

Salient Statistics—United States:	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006[e]
Production (sales), mine	3	—	—	—	—
Imports for consumption	7	5	3	3	2
Exports[1]	7	3	2	2	3
Shipments from Government stockpile excesses	—	—	—	—	—
Consumption, estimated	7	5	3	3	2
Price, average value, dollars per ton[2]	160	220	255	255	NA
Stocks, producer, yearend	NA	NA	—	—	—
Employment, mine and mill, number	15	2	—	—	—
Net import reliance[3] as a percentage of estimated consumption	100	100	100	100	100

Recycling: None.

Import Sources (2002-05): Canada, 89%; and other, 11%.

Tariff: Item	Number	Normal Trade Relations 12-31-06
Asbestos	2524.00.0000	Free.

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

Government Stockpile: None.

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ASBESTOS

Events, Trends, and Issues: There was no production of asbestos in the United States. U.S. exports increased to an estimated 3,380 tons in 2006 from 1,510 tons in 2005. Exports may include some nonasbestos materials and reexports, as U.S. production of asbestos ceased in 2002. Imports decreased to an estimated 2,340 tons in 2006 from 2,530 tons in 2005. Domestic use of asbestos declined to an estimated 2,340 tons in 2006 from 2,530 tons in 2005. All the asbestos used in the United States was chrysotile. Canada remained the leading supplier of asbestos for domestic consumption.

The Mine Safety and Health Administration reviewed testimony related to its proposed reduction of the 8-hour time-weighted average permissible exposure level to 0.1 fiber per cubic centimeter from 2.0 fibers per cubic centimeter for asbestos. No deadline has been set for a decision concerning this action. Health research and asbestos cleanup continued in Libby, MT, where vermiculite contaminated with asbestos was mined and processed, and at several vermiculite processing plants across the country. The health risk posed by asbestos exposure in populated areas, such as housing developments, hiking trails, and school settings, remained a contentious topic of discussion, particularly in El Dorado County, CA. This issue arose because residential development, particularly in California, expanded into areas where outcrops of asbestos occur.

A United Nations committee did not reach a consensus with regard to the inclusion of chrysotile under its Prior Informed Consent (PIC) Procedure of the Rotterdam Convention. A final decision will be made at their next meeting in 2008. Under the PIC procedure, countries exporting PIC-listed materials would have to inform the recipient countries of the hazardous content prior to shipment. The importing country would then decide whether or not to accept the shipment. All other forms of asbestos are included on the PIC list.

World Mine Production, Reserves, and Reserve Base:

	Mine production		Reserves[4]	Reserve base[4]
	2005	2006[e]		
United States	—	—	Small	Large
Brazil	195	236	Moderate	Moderate
Canada	200	240	Large	Large
China	520	400	Large	Large
Kazakhstan	355	350	Large	Large
Russia	925	925	Large	Large
Zimbabwe	122	110	Moderate	Moderate
Other countries	84	80	Moderate	Large
World total (rounded)	2,400	2,300	Large	Large

World Resources: The world has 200 million tons of identified resources. The U.S. resources are large, but are composed mostly of short-fiber asbestos, whose use is more limited than long-fiber asbestos in asbestos-based products.

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 or rocks, such as perlite, serpentine, silica, and talc, are 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; however, imports account for all domestic consumption.
[4]See Appendix C for definitions.

U.S. Geological Survey, Mineral Commodity Summaries, January 2007