ASBESTOS

(Data in metric tons unless otherwise noted)

Domestic Production and Use: Asbestos has not been mined in the United States since 2002, so the United States is dependent on imports to meet manufacturing needs. Asbestos consumption in the United States was estimated to be 715 tons, based on asbestos imports through July 2009. Roofing products were estimated to account for about 65% of U.S. consumption and other applications, 35%.

Salient Statistics—United States:	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009[e]
Production (sales), mine	—	—	—	—	—
Imports for consumption	2,530	2,230	1,730	1,460	715
Exports[1]	1,510	3,410	815	368	55
Consumption, estimated	2,530	2,230	1,730	1,460	715
Price, average value, dollars per ton[2]	561	451	473	746	613
Net import reliance[3] as a percentage of estimated consumption	100	100	100	100	100

Recycling: None.

Import Sources (2005-08): Canada, 89%; and other, 11%.

Tariff: Item	Number	Normal Trade Relations 12-31-09
Asbestos other than crocidolite	2524.90.0000	Free.
Crocidolite	2524.10.0000	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 decreased to an estimated 55 tons in 2009 from 368 tons in 2008. Exports are likely to include some nonasbestos materials and reexports, as U.S. production of asbestos ceased in 2002. Imports decreased to an estimated 715 tons in 2009 from 1,460 tons in 2008. Domestic consumption of asbestos decreased to 715 tons in 2009 from 1,460 tons in 2008. Much of the decline in imports and consumption probably can be attributed to reduced commercial building construction where asbestos-based roofing compounds are used. All the asbestos used in the United States was chrysotile. Canada remained the leading supplier of asbestos for domestic consumption.

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 Republic of Korea enacted the final stage of a ban on the use of asbestos in manufactured products, effective September 2009. Under the ban, asbestos may not be used to manufacture any children's products or products in which asbestos particles may come loose and contact skin. For all other manufactured products, the asbestos content must be less than 0.1%. Under the ban, talc used in the manufacture of paint and wallpaper must be certified to contain less than 1% asbestos.

World Mine Production and Reserves:

	Mine production		Reserves[4]
	2008	2009[e]	
United States	—	—	Small
Brazil	255,000	250,000	Moderate
Canada	180,000	180,000	Large
China	280,000	280,000	Large
Kazakhstan	230,000	210,000	Large
Russia	1,020,000	1,000,000	Large
Zimbabwe	50,000	25,000	Moderate
Other countries	75,000	75,000	Moderate
World total (rounded)	2,090,000	2,000,000	Large

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

Substitutes: Numerous materials substitute for asbestos in products. 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.

[e]Estimated. — Zero.
[1]Probably includes nonasbestos materials and reexports.
[2]Average Customs value for U.S. chrysotile imports, all grades combined. Prices for individual commercial products are no longer published.
[3]Defined as imports – exports; however, imports account for all domestic consumption.
[4]See Appendix C for definitions. Reserve base estimates were discontinued in 2009; see Introduction.

U.S. Geological Survey, Mineral Commodity Summaries, January 2010