

Part 1 - Asbestos as a Carcinogenic Hazard

The attached copy of a general interest article from Food and Cosmetic Toxicology, December, 1968, summarizes very neatly the various forms of asbestos, and the evidence incriminating some forms as carcinogenic hazards.

The principal forms of commercial asbestos, making up 100% of the UK market are:

Chrysotile	82%
Amosite	13%
Crocidolite	5%

Epidemiological evidence points to crocidolite as the form mainly responsible for the carcinogenic hazard.

Experimental data from laboratory animals indicate that the above three forms, plus anthophyllite, produce asbestosis, a fibrotic condition in lung tissue, but throw no light on the carcinogenic potential of the four forms.

Although tremolite and actinolite are classified as forms of asbestos, no evidence was found to indicate that they have any carcinogenic potential.

The literature on asbestosis is quite large. The significant conclusions drawn by a number of workers in the field are that:

- a) chrysotile, crocidolite and amosite are incriminated as causative agents of tumors in exposed humans, with the tumors of a type that is much less common in the general population.
- b) workers in anthophyllite mining areas do not show an increased frequency of cancer of the lung or of other tumors associated with (a) above.
- c) actinolite is of less importance commercially than the four above, but good comparable data are not available.
- d) no evidence could be found to clear or incriminate tremolite.