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End user exposure from the use of asbestos cement and other asbestos products

Abstract \*

Past work practices for the use of asbestos cement and other products were experimentally simulated. The tasks simulated included:

- Drilling asbestos cement with a hand drill
- Drilling asbestos cement with a power drill
- Cutting asbestos cement with a hand saw
- Cutting asbestos cement with a power saw
- Shaking of cotton coveralls worn during the power sawing of asbestos cement
- Sanding asbestos cement by hand
- Sanding asbestos cement with a powered flexible disk
- Handling and shaking an asbestos blanket
- Bench grinding moulded and woven asbestos brake linings

Most simulations were carried out in a small ventilated test chamber (~20 m<sup>3</sup>). Airborne particle counts were measured with the midget impinger, respirable fibre levels were measured with the membrane filter method. Subjective observations of airborne dust levels made, and estimates of fibre generation rates were calculated.

The results indicate that many end user practices resulted in clearly visible dust clouds which were associated with short term exposure well above 5 mppcf and airborne fibre levels above 50 f/ml. The ratio of midget impinger particles to membrane filter fibres for working asbestos cement were generally around 1:1. The simulated midget impinger measurements were found to be consistent with unpublished midget impinger measurements located in government archives.

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