

[UK Scientists Say Asbestos Threat Underestimated](#)

(Posted by Tom Lamb at www.AsbestosHUB.com on July 22, 2009; see <http://bit.ly/U21VL>)

Medical researchers in the UK are warning that the health consequences from asbestos fibers may have been seriously underestimated.

The Ministry of Justice is expected to reveal this week whether it will reverse a landmark judgment that prevents those diagnosed with pleural plaques – an early indicator of contamination – from taking legal action.

As many as 90,000 people a year may be developing pleural plaques, yet the UK government's Industrial Injuries Advisory Council (IIAC) nevertheless advises against adding it to the approved list of "compensatable disablement" schemes.

Premature fatalities resulting from asbestos exposure and later development of mesothelioma have started to emerge in other professions, including electricians, plumbers, garage mechanics, teachers and even hairdressers.

Estimates by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) suggest the UK epidemic will peak in the middle of the next decade with about 5,000 deaths a year. The time from diagnosis of mesothelioma to death is usually short-lived.

The sale of asbestos was banned in the UK 10 years ago and was removed from some buildings. But it remains in others, in pipe insulation, ducts, and even hair salon blow dryers were at one stage insulated with asbestos. The new evidence has emerged from studies commissioned to assess the impact of long-term exposure. The outlook is not pretty.

A 2009 report by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) reclassified some cancers and concluded that, "Sufficient evidence is now available to show that asbestos also causes cancer of the larynx (throat) and of the ovary," as reported in the Lancet Oncology journal.

As many as 125 million people worldwide still work in asbestos-contaminated offices and factories, according to the IARC estimation. Further, "Although asbestos has been banned or restricted in most of the industrialised world, its use is increasing in parts of Asia, South America and the former Soviet Union."

More than half of work-related deaths from six major cancers in the UK are due to asbestos, according to a team of London-based public health researchers. One of the problems is that many people don't realize when they are exposed to asbestos.

The true level of asbestos-related deaths is partially disguised by the fact that those who contract lung cancer tend to blame themselves for smoking at some stage in their life rather than making a connection to asbestos.

The Ministry of Justice is expected to announce soon whether it will overturn a landmark House of Lords judgment made in 2007 that barred claimants from suing for compensation if they have been diagnosed as suffering from pleural plaques. The Industrial Injuries Advisory Council estimated that, "The condition is likely to be common, with one expert suggesting that as many as 36,000 to 90,000 people a year may be developing plaques."

In explaining why pleural plaques should not automatically trigger statutory payouts, the IIAC said: "They do not alter the structure of the lungs or restrict their expansion. Therefore, they would not be expected to cause an important degree of impaired lung function or disability. Maybe not, but they are a bad omen of future health for those diagnosed."

Attorney Tom Lamb represents people in personal injury and wrongful death cases involving mesothelioma or other asbestos cancers. The above article was posted originally on his blog, **Asbestos HUB** – with active links and readers' comments.

<http://AsbestosHUB.com>