

How to save 5 million € in one year?

Asbestos Watchdog (AW) has already saved U.K. property owners and businesses some five million pounds in the past 6 months. Indeed, in one year, AW registered over 5,000 complaints and visited over 1,000 sites containing ACMs.

For those of you who are hearing about Asbestos Watchdog for the first time, this organization is one of the few voices protesting against the shameless exploitation of the United Kingdom's law enforcing the removal asbestos everywhere. Asbestos Watchdog was set up a year ago with a mission to advise and counsel people confused by the hysteria promoted by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE)* - caused in large part by HSE considering that all forms of asbestos are potential killers, and not least by its extraordinary blunder when it included Artex in the regulations.

But what is Artex?

Artex a decorative plaster resembling paint, was widely used between the 1950s and 1970s. This textured plaster was used to decorate ceilings and walls in over 8 million homes and commercial properties. Artex contains approximately 2% chrysotile fibres. According to Asbestos Watchdog, Artex has been wrongly classed as an asbestos coating.

For example, here is the story of an owner of a seaside hotel at Saundersfoot (Wales), Mr. Andrew Evans. The HSE certified contractor, hired by Mr. Evans, told him he would have to pay 24,000 pounds to have the Artex removed from his walls (and again as much to redecorate). Thankfully for Mr. Evans, his architect recommended he go for a second opinion (Asbestos Watchdog) who demonstrated that the Artex contained no trace of asbestos, therefore the removal unnecessary and saved Mr. Evans almost 50,000 pounds.

As described in a Sunday Telegraph article (November 2004), one of the consequences of HSE's decision to remove asbestos everywhere, is that contractors can now make millions of pounds per year charging exorbitant sums to remove a substance which is, to all intents and purposes, harmless. Another consequence

of the confusion surrounding Artex, is that countless homeowners are being told by inspectors, estate agents and building contractors that their home has lost up to a fifth of its value, or is even unsaleable, unless the Artex is removed by a certified contractor and at enormous cost.

Thankfully, due to research carried out by this one-year old UK organization, the HSE now confirms that Artex can be handled far more safely and inexpensively.

This initiative alone will save U.K. property owners over 18 billion pounds in the next few years. It will also terminate the current practice of mortgage lenders to refuse lending money on properties until the Artex has been professionally removed.

Unfortunately, complete success will have to wait since under the new European Union waste management regulations, the material is still classified as 'asbestos containing' and as such, remains a 'hazardous waste'.

**HSE: United Kingdom's version of the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).*



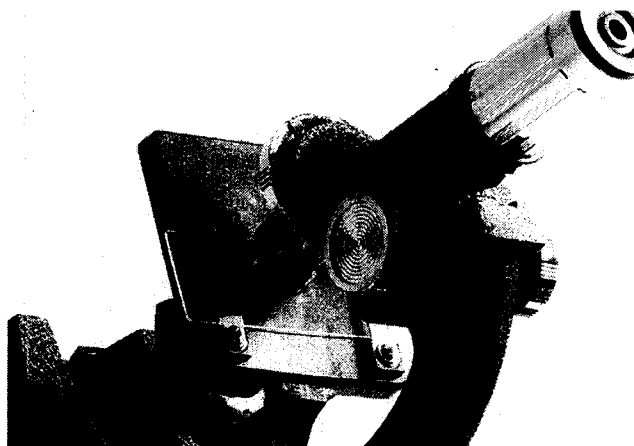
Who wants to pay?

Recently, Amicus (an important workers' association in Great Britain) was exulting at its court victory over three insurance companies in Manchester (UK). In this case, Mr. Justice Holland ruled that compensation can be paid to asbestos claimants with pleural plaques, calcified scar tissue on the lung. As mentioned in a Sunday Telegraph article, this gave the go-ahead to what Amicus estimates at 14,000 claims a year.

"The insurance companies lost a legal precedent case that would have proved that white asbestos, chrysotile, could not be a cause of plural plaques," says Asbestos Watchdog Chief Inspector, John Bridle. Indeed, in 1997, Dr. John Hoskins said that "plaques are merely scar tissue arising from a range of different causes, of which asbestos exposure is only one. They have no malign implications for health, and there is not a single case of a plaque arising from exposure to white asbestos, since its fibres do not persist long enough in the lung."

Yet Mr. Justice Holland made no distinction between white asbestos, constituting more than 90% of all asbestos products, and the harmful blue and brown forms of asbestos, a different mineral, wrote the Sunday Telegraph.

Amicus may now rejoice, but everybody should instead be worried since it is we who will have to foot the bill at the end.



Since this decision, Asbestos Watchdog (AW) has been conducting meetings with one of the biggest U.K. insurers. This is where AW uncovered the disturbing fact that their advisors are senior consultant doctors (whose names would be well-known to us all). It seems that it is they who have been responsible for drafting the position on asbestos for all UK insurance companies... and then, they step over to the other side and act as highly paid experts, for the defence lawyers. The judges are aware of their dual position but they have decided that this position makes them better able to give a balanced opinion...

"With the U.S. Chamber of Commerce wanting investigations into possible fraud between these senior doctors and the asbestos tort lawyers, it has the potential to become such a powerful media story, that the insurance companies will almost certainly be forced to re-evaluate their opinion on white asbestos," concluded Mr. Bridle.