

Asbestos: Current Situation in Taiwan

Ho Kuang-Wan

Taiwan Association for Victims of Occupational Injuries (TAVOI), Taiwan

Abstract

In the 1980s, because of the asbestos industry, a lot of American workers got abdominal cavity cancer, pulmonary asbestosis and lung cancer. The American government then imposed stricter exposure standards for asbestos, which resulted in asbestos manufacturers searching for factories in developing countries. At that time Taiwan had no asbestos production controls, so many asbestos factories migrated from America. This not only caused serious pollution in the factories and the environment, but also damaged the health of both workers and the public. In the 1990s, Taiwan revised the conditions for asbestos usage and management. This led to a majority of asbestos factories moving to other places, such as mainland China, Vietnam, Thailand. However, asbestos still continued to be used in many factories illegally. In addition, there is no restriction on using asbestos as an ingredient of building materials. Many workers don't know how dangerous things are that they touch every day.

Asbestos has already been confirmed to be the definitive pathogenic factor in pulmonary asbestosis and it's widely used in Taiwan; however, there are just a few cases recognized in Taiwan. Even an occupational disease doctor wondered why he hasn't diagnosed any asbestosis cases for over twenty years. What is the reason? We would like to discuss the following points:

1. Current asbestos industry condition and worker's situation in Taiwan.
2. Current governments' policy and regulations on asbestos.
3. Current medical service system of occupational disease.