

Global Phase-Out of Asbestos Products

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Abstract

With national efforts to regulate asbestos hazards in Europe and North America in the 1970s, there appeared a disparity in protective measures between like plants owned by the same multinational companies in different parts of the world. Asbestos firms were charged with exporting hazards and having "double standards" in health, safety, and environmental protection. At that time, the asbestos industry was at its peak, and annual global asbestos use exceeded 5,000,000 metric tons. The industry was dominated by multinational firms with asbestos mines and asbestos manufacturing plants around the world. With increasing public awareness and concern, regulation, and liabilities for compensating asbestos victims, the big asbestos companies were forced to develop alternative products, and some were bankrupted. But even today there have been double standards concerns raised in other industries where asbestos products are used, such as the automobile industry. Efforts by global corporations to eliminate asbestos use and develop codes of practice for the control of hazards from in-place asbestos construction materials, as well as NGOs' efforts to examine the conduct of global corporations will be discussed.