



Tuesday, June 26, 2012

RE: Construction on asbestos-producing plant in Bihar

Dear Honorable Shri Nitish Kumar,

The Asbestos Disease Awareness Organization (ADAO), asks you to consider the scientific and historical data regarding asbestos exposure when conducting your report on asbestos hazards related to dumping the material in a populous area. ADAO is an international, independent non-profit organization, founded in 2004 and is dedicated to providing education about the dangerous of asbestos and eliminating asbestos disease through education and advocacy.

More than 30 years ago, the International Agency for Research on Cancer declared asbestos to be a human carcinogen. The World Health Organization (WHO) and International Labor Organization (ILO) agree: asbestos is a human carcinogen and there is no safe level of asbestos exposure. Decades of science have proven that all six types of asbestos fibers – chrysotile, amosite, crocidolite, tremolite, anthophyllite, and actinolite – are carcinogenic.

The WHO states that 107,000 workers die annually from asbestos-related lung cancer, mesothelioma, and asbestosis. This lethal mineral has been banned in 55 countries, and in February of 2012 the court in Turin, Italy found former Eternit owners Stephan Schmidheiny and Louis Cartier de Marchienne guilty of “causing a continuing disaster in health and environment” and “willfully neglecting safety regulations in the workplace,” exposing over 2,000 employees to the deadly fiber. The court sentenced them both to 16 years in prison and awarded millions of Euros to victims and their families.

Despite the industry’s disingenuous assertions, every form of asbestos - including chrysotile – is a proven human carcinogen. The nearly invisible asbestos fibers can be 700 times smaller than human hair, odorless, tasteless, and remain suspended in the air for seconds or days. Occupational exposure remains one of the greatest known sources of asbestos disease. But it’s not just workers who are at risk; it’s also their families. Asbestos fibers do not discriminate because of age, social class, or gender, and the profile of victims is changing from a male laborer to women in their 50s and children.

Asbestos-related diseases are frequently misdiagnosed because symptoms can be mistaken for pneumonia or bronchitis and victims are likely to present symptoms and complaints similar to many other common respiratory diseases. Coupled with a long latency period of typically 10-50 years, both malignant and nonmalignant diseases become under reported, and the challenges in treating asbestos-related diseases are only exacerbated. Most patients die within 6–12 months of diagnosis.

Despite all that is known about the dangers of asbestos, annual world production remains at over 2 million tons. Russia is now the leading producer of asbestos worldwide, followed by China, Brazil, Kazakhstan, and Canada. In 2008, these countries accounted for 96% of the world production of asbestos (USGS 2008). A reported 43 percent of asbestos mined in Canada is exported to to India.

I ask that in light of these facts, you please halt construction on any asbestos plant in Bihar.

Sincerely,

*Linda Reinstein*

Linda Reinstein  
ADAO President and Co-Founder