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5. Pedestrian struck by pickup in La Habra still critical
6. Two killed in Diamond Bar crash involving former city manager of Whittier, La Habra
7. Orchard Dale Water District places general manager on administrative leave
8. Four convicted of 18-year-old Pico Rivera man's murder
9. Pico Rivera man guilty of teen's murder
10. \$4.2 million settlement reached in mistaken LAPD shooting during Dorner manhunt

Letters to the Editor: The dangers still presented by asbestos

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Updated: 05/23/2012 11:49:53 AM PDT

Do not breathe.

Most of us have seen the advertisements on television advising those diagnosed with mesothelioma to call an attorney hot line. These ads are the result of a class-action law suit settled by the major producers of asbestos in the United States many years ago to compensate the victims of this aggressive, incurable cancer, caused by occupational or environmental exposure to the carcinogen which had been widely used in industry as a fire retardant and insulator.

So it was a great surprise to us to learn that the U.S. continues to import these mineral fibers to this day and that the use of asbestos is not yet banned despite the existence of safer substitutes. Though the days in this country are gone when fathers brought asbestos home in their hair and on their clothes, which contaminated their families, we still allow this to happen to people overseas for products that we use.

At a screening of the Italian film "Dust: The Great Asbestos Trial," and a subsequent panel discussion led by the president and co-founder of the Asbestos Disease Awareness Organization (ADAO), Linda Reinstein, we recently became aware of this. The documentary focuses on asbestos litigation, particularly the lawsuit against Eternit executives in Italy convicted for negligence that culminated in the deaths of 3,000 people who had been subject to asbestos exposure. The multinational company processed asbestos fibers under conditions that caused employees to be unwittingly

exposed. A similar factory in Brazil admonished workers, "Do not breathe." This poignant line typifies the disconnect between higher-ups and

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their employees. The film highlights the experiences of individuals suffering from asbestos-related disease, including Luisa Minazzi, an anti-asbestos activist with mesothelioma. Asbestos fibers are nearly invisible, and any incidence of exposure can result in disease up to 50 years later. Mesothelioma has a median survival rate of less than one year from diagnosis. Although uncontested in the scientific community since the 1950s, the harmful affects of asbestos were not acknowledged by Eternit until years later. Indeed, some companies still contend that there is a safe level of controlled use, notwithstanding the scientific community's objections to these claims.

Though the mining of asbestos has been banned in the U.S. since 2002, our country imported 1,100 tons of the substance last year for use in roofing products and the chloralkali industry. Linda

Reinstein is calling for a ban on the importation of raw asbestos and asbestos products, as detailed on the ADAO blog, where she wrote: "I have lost my husband Alan to mesothelioma, a disease caused by asbestos exposure. Nothing can bring him or the hundreds of thousands of other victims back to life, but we can begin by aggressively preventing exposure thus eliminating deadly diseases."

Camila Strassle and Terra Cheung

Flintridge Sacred Heart Academy

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