

Strategy of “Making Thai Society Asbestos-Free”

Target

By the year 2012, Thailand will have abolished the import, production, and distribution of all types of asbestos and all products containing asbestos, in order to lessen economic losses and alleviate damage to the health of workers, consumers, and the general public.

Strategy

To make Thai society asbestos-free, 4 strategies are envisaged:

1. Strategy to abolish the use of asbestos and prevent dangers arising from it through legal measures.
2. Strategy to encourage the use of substitute substances that are safe for health, as well as invoke management efforts that will control, lessen, and abolish its use.
3. Strategy to impart knowledge and engage in public relations so the public would have knowledge of the issues. The strategy would include developing a system of data and information.
4. Strategy of developing surveillance and monitoring system of at risk groups in terms of their health and environment. Included in this strategy is the development of disease diagnosis capability.

1. Strategy to abolish the use of asbestos and prevent dangers arising from it through legal measures.

The Occupational Health and Environment Committee shall set up a sub-committee to “develop laws related to asbestos”, with the Ministry of Public Health to be the focal point in coordinating the effort, enlisting cooperation of the Ministries of Labour, Industry, Finance, Information and Communications Technology, Interior, Natural Resources and Environment, Commerce, Ministry of Social Development and Human Security educational institutions and other related agencies. The overall task is to develop enforcement measures that aim to abolish all types of asbestos, and specify an appropriate timeframe for improving the following legal instruments:

- 1.1 The abolishment and control of the use of asbestos

1.1.1 Declare that chrysotile asbestos is a type 3 hazardous substance, which means it would be forbidden to produce, import, export and possess it.

1.1.2 Set in place specific laws, rules and regulations that aim to control products in which asbestos is a component, especially high risk products such as hair blowers, hair dryers, etc.. This could be done by arranging for a review and monitoring of the appropriateness of permits to produce, distribute, import, and export relevant products. The plan has also to cover products that may be contaminated by asbestos contained in raw materials used in its production, such as cosmetic products that contain talcum.

1.1.3 Adjust laws already in existence on the control, export and import of asbestos products and products that contain asbestos as a component.

1.1.4 Consider abolishing the use of asbestos and getting people to use substitutes the latter by specifying it as a special condition such that it will not affect tax collection of other substances that are under the same code.

1.1.5 Encourage the setting of standards for industrial products that use substitutes for asbestos.

1.2 Preventing danger as a result of working in an asbestos containing environment

1.2.1 Develop measures to control the razing, repairing, and extension of buildings that involve the use of asbestos, including control of the use of materials that contain asbestos. Also, this should include announcements tasking responsible agencies such as the Department of Public Works and Urban Planning, the Department of Local Administration, and the Ministry of Industry to implement such measures. These measures should be in the nature of a special law. These bodies should develop guidelines for agencies tasked with supervision and control to use in their work.

1.2.2 Develop a system of work permit and control of registration for those engaged in the overseeing and control work mentioned in 1.2.1, and also developing a monitoring system of such work.

1.2.3 Specify higher standards for safety in work, this to include developing the standard or default values used to measure the amount of asbestos dust in the general environment.

1.3 Disposal of asbestos waste

1.3.1 Set standards for the disposal of asbestos in the places involved in the control of asbestos, in work involving disposal, particularly within the construction industry and the installation business. There also has to be development of standards such that they are congruent with the relevant conventions on the control of asbestos.

1.4 Compensation for damages and welfare

1.4.1 Set principles and standards of compensation for damages incurred, and provide the necessary welfare for those affected by asbestos.

1.4.2 A welfare fund to help those affected by asbestos shall be set up.

1.5 Develop legal measures and measures to compensate in the long run, so as to induce people to use less materials and construction implements that contain asbestos in the future.

2. Strategy to encourage the use of substitute substances that are safe for health, as well as invoke management efforts that will control, lessen, and abolish its use.

2.1 There should be a set of regulations in the Prime Minister's Office on the purchase of building materials and hiring of contractors for the construction of government buildings and buildings of organizations under the supervision of the government. The regulations would specify that no materials containing asbestos be used in the construction, extension and repair of buildings.

2.2 The Ministries of Industry, of Labour and the Office of Consumer Protection are to use praise and commendations as a tool to recognize those enterprises that cooperate with government policy on the use of substitutes, so as to raise the morale and willingness of the key actors to go along on a sustained basis.

2.3 The Office of the National Research Council in cooperation with educational institutions, the Ministries of Education, of Science and Technology, Industry, Public Health, Office of the Thailand Research Fund, Office of the Thai Health Promotion Foundation, with the private sector and relevant agencies, are to jointly do the following:

2.3.1 Support and do research on the situation on illnesses, on relevant products, on alternative products, costs of production, such that information and data could be had that would be useful to producers, consumers, and the general public. This effort is to include the development of local wisdom aimed at discovering a community originated product to replace industrial originated product in accordance with the principle of self-reliance, aiming for such product to utilize asbestos substitutes which have the same level of effectiveness as asbestos. Moreover, the knowledge gained should be disseminated to the public.

2.3.2 Disseminate knowledge of the development of such products to the private sector, so businesses can use it promptly without wasting time and capital to develop the products themselves.

2.4 Build up cooperation with relevant leading industries in Thailand such as producers of cement, tiles and roofing, brakes, clutches, hair blowers and construction companies. The aim

being to exchange learning and knowledge on asbestos-substitute products. At the same time, forge an alliance among these to find measures to decrease the use of asbestos.

3. Strategy to impart knowledge and engage in public relations so the public would have knowledge of the issues. The strategy would include developing a system of data and information.

The state agencies such as the Prime Minister's office, the Ministries of Public Health, Industries, Labour, Interior, Education, Finance, Commerce, Science and Technology, Natural Resources Environment, educational institutions and the Office of the Thailand Health Fund are to work together with civil society and relevant organizations to do the following:

3.1 Establish a data centre to facilitate exchange of information and data among agencies related to the problem, by using electronic media. The centre is to be a clearing house for data on asbestos, and is to update the data continually as well as disseminate information to the public and related organizations every year.

3.2 The local governmental organizations are to arrange public forums, to enable exchanges of opinions, information, gather facts from every part of society and from stakeholders.

3.3 Set up a surveillance and monitoring plan, to monitor cooperation with civil society alliances and networks in every province. This is also to demonstrate progress in implementation and evaluation, which is to be continually communicated to the public.

3.4 Work with the media and civil society to impart knowledge to the people and consumers about announcements made and information on products that contain asbestos, as well as dangers emanating from asbestos. The information is to be communicated through various media including broadcasting towers and community radios on a continual basis and also covering every area in the country.

3.5 The Ministry of Education and Public Health are to integrate the publicity effort with the teaching and learning curriculum both at the central and local level, on the issue of dangers from the use of asbestos.

3.6 The Thai Health Promotion Foundation is to support dissemination in order to do public relations on a continual basis.

4. Strategy to develop a surveillance and monitoring system of the problem in terms of health and environment, including the investigation and diagnosis of diseases.

The Ministries of Public Health in cooperation with the Ministries of Labour, Industry, Interior, Natural Resources and Environment, together with educational institutions, the private sector and civil society are take the following actions:

4.1 Develop a unit to check and assess health and environmental risks, covering all at risk areas in the country. The work of the unit is to be in accordance with internationally recognized technical standards, as well as being strict in the matter of law enforcement. The aim is to have an appropriate safety standard in the workplace that will prevent and control related diseases.

4.2 Specify principles and criteria used and do research and development: in health screening; in health surveillance and risk assessment with regard to health; in standards used in diagnosis and verification; in reading films; in development, registration, increase in the number of relevant public health personnel as well as of those who play a role in quality control and support the implementation of measures described above.

4.3 Ensure that there are linkages and access to the data and information among relevant agencies such that surveillance on risk of dangers from asbestos is efficient. There also has to be registration of asbestos/products containing asbestos, including places where they are used and stored; registration of persons who have come into contact with asbestos for such period as to invoke incubation of diseases. There should also be gathering of surveillance data on diseases connected with asbestos, and this to include establishment of a database system linking data assessing contact exposure with data on illnesses. Also, a system of continuous follow-up on those who have been in contact with asbestos must be established. The system is to cover exposure prior to, during, and after work, and it also must cover at risk groups working in the informal sector, and also the general population.

4.4 Develop cooperation in monitoring and inspection of products within the country, so as to form a database that links up with the data on health of those exposed to asbestos.