

Health Effects due to Asbestos Exposure

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Asbestos related diseases include pulmonary asbestosis, lung cancer, mesothelioma, and pleural diseases. On 29 June 2005, a newspaper disclosed that many workers had died and/or suffered from asbestos related diseases who had been engaged in the manufacturing asbestos high pressure cement pipe using crocidolite and chrysotile at the Kanzaki plant of Kubota Corp (Amagasaki City, Hyogo Prefecture) and also five residents within 1 kilometer from this plant suffered from pleural mesothelioma, all of them had no occupational asbestos exposure history.

After this “Kubota shock”, Japanese government decided to adopt “Comprehensive Measures on Asbestos” on December 2005. The main is the enactment of new law for the relief of victims. This law was approved by the ordinary session of the Diet in February 2006.

This “Kubota shock” also has made awareness both to the public and physicians on asbestos-related diseases, especially mesothelioma.

An independent administrative corporation, “Environmental Restoration and Conservation Agency” is responsible for the Relief for the Victims of Health Hazards Caused by Asbestos. At the end of September 2006, a total of 1,237 patients is proposing for this relief, (mesothelioma 811; lung cancer 366; unknown 60) and a total of 1,864 bereaved families is proposing, (mesothelioma 1,535; lung cancer 298; Unknown 31). Condolence money was decided to be paid to the bereaved families for 1,315 deaths from mesothelioma on December 20th. Judgment Committee decided 425 mesothelioma patients, and 122 lung cancers should be paid, 36 of mesothelioma and 27 of lung cancer should be rejected, and the others are impossible for judgment because of insufficient data till 20th December 2006.