

**THE CANCER ASSOCIATION OF SOUTH AFRICA'S POSITION STATEMENT ON CANCER AND THE ENVIRONMENT**

**FACT SHEET ON ASBESTOS**

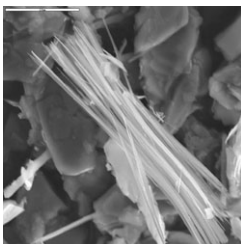
**WHY SHOULD I CARE ABOUT ASBESTOS?**

- Because exposure can lead to mesothelioma, a cancer of the lining of the lung with a very bad prognosis.
- Because there are abandoned asbestos mines in South Africa that may still pose a threat.
- Because asbestos has been used in building materials such as roofs for RDP houses and it is not clear whether this poses a threat or not.
- Because asbestos has been used to build schools in the past and it is not known to what extent this poses a current threat.
- Because it is estimated that approximately 100 000 people exposed to asbestos in ship building have died of asbestos related diseases (ARD).
- Because over 800 000 claimants were recorded in 2006 and the costs awarded in the USA alone were \$250 billion.

**WHAT IS ASBESTOS?**

- Asbestos is the name given to a number of naturally occurring, fibrous silicate minerals mined for their useful properties such as thermal insulation, chemical and thermal stability, and high tensile strength.
- The current federal definition of asbestos is the asbestiform varieties of: chrysotile (serpentine); crocidolite (riebeckite); amosite (cummingtonite/grunerite); anthophyllite; tremolite; and actinolite.

**WHAT DOES ASBESTOS LOOK LIKE?**



Long, thin fibres that cannot be digested.

**WHERE IS ASBESTOS FOUND?**

- Abandoned mines at: Northern Cape – Prieska, Koegas, Kuruman; North West – Pomfert; Limpopo - Matete, Penge, Lebowakgoma; Mpumalanga – Barberton, Bulembu.
- RDP roofs
- Water pipes
- Schools

**WHAT SOURCE OF ASBESTOS POSES THE GREATEST THREAT SOUTH AFRICA?**

- Unknown

**HOW CAN THE POTENTIAL CANCER RISK OF ASBESTOS BE REDUCED?**

- Identify and reduce human contamination wherever it may be occurring.
- Final regulations for the banning of asbestos came into effect in March 2008. Addressing a media briefing Tourism Minister Marthinus van Schalkwyk said the regulations would prohibit the use, processing, manufacturing, and import and export of any asbestos or asbestos-containing materials (ACMs).