



ASBESTOS RESOURCE CENTER

Asbestos Litigation

Asbestos Company Liability

Tragically, companies that produced asbestos-containing products during the 1940-1970s well knew of the dangers of [asbestos](#) and chose not to inform its employees, allowing their workers to blindly work in an environment that exposed them to a potent carcinogen, and to be exposed daily.

Knowledge of the dangers of asbestos was evident even before asbestos was in widespread use. Internal documents found in corporate files reveal that not only did the companies have knowledge of the hazards of asbestos, but also took extra steps to prevent publication or mention of asbestos related dangers. One such case is when Sumner Simpson, the president of Raybestos-Manhattan, wrote to Vandiver Brown, head of Johns-Manville's legal department in 1935. He said, "I think the less said about asbestos the better off we are." Brown replied, "I quite agree with you that our interests are best served by having [asbestosis](#) [an asbestos caused disease] receive the minimum of publicity." In 1936, officials from asbestos manufacturing companies met in New York City to agree to secretly finance animal experiments at the Trudeau Foundation's Saranac Laboratory in Saranac, NY. Their intent was to gather data that would support a defense to lawsuits that were beginning to be brought against the asbestos companies. Before the final publication, the Saranac report had made reference to the findings that animals exposed to asbestos developed cancer. In the final report, however, all mention of the cancer was erased. In addition, the revised report was silent in its criticism of the asbestos dust threshold limit value (TLV) and previously published studies that linked asbestos with cancer. Later in 1952, discussions from an Saranac symposium that included asbestosis and cancer caused by asbestos were never published.



This "sworn secrecy" in the asbestos industry is also shown elsewhere. In 1947, the Asbestos Textile Institute (ATI) sponsored a study of textile factories by the Industrial Hygiene Foundation. The study found that the workers had asbestosis, made recommendations about medical examinations, and recommended a re-evaluation of the industry's threshold limit value for asbestos. However, these findings were never published outside of the ATI. In the 1950s, the Institute rejected funding for further cancer studies because "such an investigation would stir up a hornet's nest and put the whole industry under suspicion."

As more and more information about the dangers of asbestos became known to asbestos manufacturers, the industry feared that the dangers of asbestos would be publicized and would damage profits. Industry members opposed a health and safety booklet because "the booklet creates fear in the minds of buyers, users, and workers without justification. These fears would be damaging to the entire industry." The asbestos companies knew that this was a problem that affected the entire asbestos industry and worked together to keep the dangers of asbestos from becoming well known to the public.

The companies that made and marketed [asbestos products](#) knew that the products they were releasing to the American public and to the American workforce would result in asbestosis, lung cancer, [mesothelioma](#), and other cancers. It was no mystery that these diseases are directly the result of being exposed to asbestos. Instead of removing their employees from this harmful environment as soon as they found out about its dangers, they chose to let their workers to continue working in an asbestos hazardous environment; the asbestos companies chose to put profits over the lives of their employees - and their customers. The epidemic of [asbestos disease](#) and plague of death following would never have happened if asbestos manufacturers had cared more about people than profits. Lives, instead of money, would have been saved.

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