



**ASBESTOS IS DEADLY SERIOUS — PREVENT EXPOSURE
EU LAUNCHES EUROPEAN ASBESTOS CAMPAIGN ON 1 SEPTEMBER 2006**

Asbestos is deadly serious — prevent exposure: this is the motto of the European Asbestos Campaign 2006, to be launched on 1 September 2006 by the EU Commission and SLIC — the coordinating committee of Member State Labour Inspectorates.

Thousands of people still die every year from the consequences of asbestos exposure, even 20 or 30 years after the event.

The marketing, handling and use of asbestos-containing products is banned. Nevertheless, the practical problem of preventing exposure to asbestos in the course of removal, demolition, servicing and maintenance activities remains. Furthermore, in an age of close economic ties and globalisation, we need to take care not to import asbestos-containing materials.

To prevent these hazards, the EU has a clear and distinct policy, comprising preventive legislation, information and awareness-raising activities, cooperation with stakeholders, and coordinated implementation, enforcement and monitoring.

- Legislation has been under continuous development since the seventies — with the EU thus taking a leading role in protecting workers from this deadly health hazard: since 2005, a general ban on the production and marketing of asbestos and asbestos-containing products has been in effect; the handling of asbestos in any form has been prohibited since April 2006, with only demolition, maintenance, and removal work allowed under strictly regulated conditions.
- Under the EU-LEONARDO programme, funds have been allocated to an international project to develop appropriate information and training material: <title>
- Effective legislation needs appropriate implementation and surveillance, which is why the Member State Labour Inspectorates — coordinated by the Senior Labour Inspectors Committee (SLIC) — is launching the European Asbestos Campaign 2006.

This campaign is due to start on 1 September 2006 simultaneously in all the Member States. Its main focus will be on Demolition-Maintenance-Removal (DMR) work:

- removal of weakly-bound asbestos;
- maintenance and removal of asbestos cement and other tightly-bound asbestos products;
- waste disposal.

The campaign will be accompanied by information and training activities in association with the **European Agency for Occupational Safety and Health at Work**. The Agency will also have a special website where you will find additional information and links to national health and safety websites on the risks of asbestos exposure — see <http://osha.eu.int/OSHA>

In conjunction with the campaign and publicity activities, there will also be a “Practical Guide on Best Practice to Minimise Asbestos Risks” for work that involves (or may involve) asbestos.

This guide will

- help identify asbestos and asbestos products during the use, maintenance and servicing of plant, equipment and buildings and raise awareness of their presence;
- describe good practice on how to remove asbestos (e.g. through dust suppression, enclosure and protective equipment) and how to handle asbestos-cement products and wastes;
- encourage an approach to protective equipment and clothing which takes into account human factors and individual variability.

The main target groups are employers, employees and labour inspectors.

- For employers, the guide provides information on the state-of-the-art technical, organisational, and personal safety and health protection measures that they are obliged to apply.
- For employees, the guide gives information on protective measures, focuses on key points that they should be trained in, and encourages them to actively contribute to safe and healthy working conditions.
- For inspectors, the guide describes the key aspects they should look out for during an inspection visit.

Beyond the Asbestos Inspection Campaign 2006, this Guide also aims to provide all those involved in work with a risk of exposure to asbestos with a common European baseline for best practices.

The Labour Inspectorates of the EU Member States are of course willing to assist their partners outside Europe: SLIC’s existing training material, the documents produced for the 2006 Campaign and the Best Practice Guide can be used in any other country wanting to tackle the health hazards of asbestos and asbestos use.

Luxembourg, 30 August 2006