

South Korea announces plans for total asbestos ban by 2009

A total ban on the manufacture, import and use of asbestos has been announced by the South Korean Ministry of Labor. Under the plan, the Ministry will restrict use of products containing asbestos step-by-step through 2008 to allow for the examination of possible substitutes. The total ban will go into effect in 2009, after which all asbestos-removal companies will be required to register with the Ministry and all articles which involve the use of asbestos will be removed according to Korea's construction laws and regulations.

In making its announcement, the Korean government notes that asbestos (also known as 'death dust') has been banned in a number of developed countries for many years. Previous to this, it was commonly used in the manufacture of floor tiles and pipe insulation materials, because it is flexible and fireproof. However, when taken into the body, the Ministry says, its fibers can cause breathing problems by damaging the lungs, causing asbestosis and increasing the risk of cancer and even death.

Contact: [kswwho@koreatimes.co.kr]

Lucien Royer
International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC)
Trade Union Advisory Committee to the OECD (TUAC)
15, Rue Laperouse - 75016 paris, France
Tel (331) 5537 3737 Fax 4754 9828
royer@tuac.org