

Research at A&M keeps asbestos danger in check

Asbestos, when properly handled, can be good news as well as bad. Research at Texas A&M University is helping keep stray asbestos fibers under check.

An engineer involved in the study points out asbestos has some good properties. The characteristics causes it to perform well as fireproof drapery, brake bands in cars, floor tiles and in corrugated steel used in heavy construction.

As microscopic airborne fibers, asbestos has been recognized as one of the most hazardous air contaminants in the workplace. Persons who inhale the invisible fibers in significant quantity can develop lung cancer and other lethal respiratory diseases.

Hair dryers insulated with it were recently removed from the market. Owners of suspect models were warned against continued use. Workers in insulation and in brake lining manufacturing jobs are more heavily exposed. New standards for handling asbestos are in development by the U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA).

Dr. Waymon Johnston, safety engineer at Texas A&M, and graduate students in his industrial engineering program have conducted research that should contribute to the standards. The study, performed under a National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health contract, was reported recently by Johnston at a Chicago meeting of the American Industrial Hygiene Conference.

They found that industrial vacuum cleaners designed to control asbestos fibers perform acceptably, but a person emptying the container may be subjected to high concentrations. Johnston tested nine models that range in price from \$250 to \$6,000.

"Calculated airborne fiber concentrations were all below present OSHA standards," Johnston reported. All the vacuum cleaners were able to contain their specified capacity, and all but one handled 25 percent more without internal problems, filter system failure or total loss of suction pressure.

"But all the concern is for the user, not the person that empties the container," Johnston noted.

"Most models are acceptable as long as there isn't bag failure," the engineer said. "We found that every time a bag ruptured or was not present, the inside of the unit was covered with asbestos fibers.

Attempts to clean a container in which a bag ruptured must be done very slowly, and it is still impossible not to agitate the fibers, creating hazardous working conditions for maintenance or service personnel, Johnston warned.

"Unless the worker cooperates in control strategies, exposure will not be reduced to the absolute minimum," he said.

Rural youth drinking close to city average

Urban teen-agers drink more than rural teen-agers, but the gap separating the two groups is getting much smaller, an expert on rural drug abuse has discovered.

Urban youth are 20 percent more likely to have tried liquor than rural youngsters, but only 8 percent separates the two groups in terms of beer consumption, explained Dr. Kenneth Nyberg, a Texas A&M University sociologist and researcher.

There is an assumption that rural drinking is not extensive and alcoholism is primarily an urban problem," Nyberg said.

"That's not the case," he emphasized. "Recent evidence suggests that problems of drug abuse, including alcohol, are nearly as prevalent in rural areas as they are in urban."

Nyberg based his finding on a recent rural drug abuse study he conducted with Texas A&M professor Dr. Alex McIntosh in the Brazos Valley area of Texas. The two-year study surveyed 1,358 students in grades 7-12 in Grimes, Brazos, Madison, Robertson, Leon, Burleson and Washington counties.

Nyberg and McIntosh both stress that their findings can be applied to the rest of the country.

The Texas Commission on Alcoholism has given Nyberg grant money to begin a study of rural alcohol abuse in Texas.

"If a family has decided to move to the country to escape the drug problems of the city, they're just kidding themselves," he added.

"Any drug a person wants — from heroin on down to alcohol — can be obtained in any rural county in Texas.

"In fact, the largest single drug abused in rural Texas today is alcohol," Nyberg continued. "Tobacco runs it a close second with marijuana and pep pills not far behind."

More than 75 percent of the students surveyed, ages 12 to 20, abused alcohol, Nyberg related. Approximately 24 percent used marijuana, and in one county alone, 4 percent of the students surveyed had tried heroin.

"With these other drugs we have found that drug-related behavior of parents and friends significantly affects the use of those drugs," Nyberg said.

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what's up

Tuesday

GROVE MOVIE: "Casablanca," starring Humphrey Bogart and Ingrid Bergman, will be shown at 8:45 p.m. at the Grove. Admission for non-students is \$1.50 and students get in free with an A&M identification. The front gate opens at 8 p.m.

INTERNATIONAL FOLK DANCERS: Will meet at 7:30 p.m. in Room 212, MSC.

SAILING CLUB: There will be a membership meeting at 7:30 p.m. in Room 308, Rudder Tower.

SUMMER SCHOOL FEES: Fees for the first summer term should be paid in G. Rollie White Coliseum by Thursday. Fees can be paid from 8 a.m. to noon and 1 — 5 p.m.

Wednesday

GROVE MOVIE: "Silent Movie," starring Mel Brooks will be shown at 8:45 p.m. (PG).

GRADUATING SENIORS: Graduation announcements can be ordered through June 15 in Room 217, MSC between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. weekdays.

APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING PROGRAM: The Physical Plant Department of Texas A&M is accepting applications for the 1979 apprenticeship training program which offers training for carpenters, electricians, air conditioning and heating mechanics, electronic technicians, plumbers, sheetmetal works, painters and automotive mechanics. Interested persons should contact the Physical Plant.

TAMU STAMP CLUB: Will meet at 7:30 p.m. in Room 502, Rudder Tower.

Thursday

GROVE MOVIE: "A Clockwork Orange," starring Malcolm McDowell, will be shown at 8:45 p.m. (R).

REGISTRATION: Thursday is the last day for enrolling and for adding new courses for the first summer session.

FREE UNIVERSITY: Registration for Free University courses for the first summer session begins Thursday. Registration will be held in the student programs office in the MSC.

NATIONAL SOCIETY OF BLACK ENGINEERS: Will meet at 7:30 p.m. in Room 504, Rudder Tower.

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Rabies incidence in Texas rises 175 percent in first 6 months of '79

Beware: your cat, dog, even your horse can be hazardous to your health.

Texas A&M University veterinary researchers report a surging 175 percent increase in the incidence of rabies in domestic animals for Texas in the first six months of this year. That is more than reason enough to immunize pets now for rabies and deter people from making pets out of wild animals such as skunks.

During the first six months of 1979 the reported number of rabies cases in dogs, cats, horses and other domestic animals has taken an alarming rise of 66 cases through May. This compares to 24 cases in all of 1978.

Dr. Leon Russell, a veterinary public health professor at Texas A&M, indicates about 85 percent of all rabies cases in Texas involve skunks. And they, by far, pose the greatest danger of transmitting the

killing disease to other animals.

Human rabies, so far, is a rarity. Only three cases have been reported in Texas in the last three years, and all were infected in Mexico before entering the state. One of those infected died.

Patricia Chamberlain, supervisor of urban programs for the Texas Rodeo and Predatory Animal Control

Service, says if anyone sees a rabid animal, the best thing to do is to try to trap it alive with a minimum of risk and then call local or state health officials.

Chamberlain says the control service will provide assistance and traps where they are available locally to aid in the capture.

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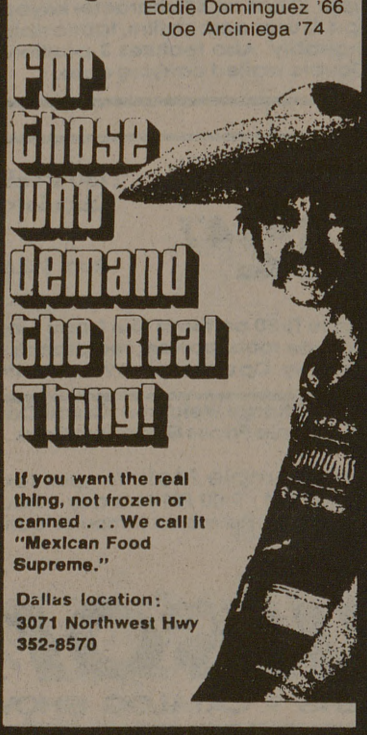


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