



ASBESTOS ENDANGERS LIVES Ban Chrysotile Now

Awareness Saves Lives

Understanding the dangers of asbestos is the first step in protecting our health and future generations. As asbestos-related diseases can take decades to appear, exposure often goes unnoticed until serious harm is done. Raising awareness helps people recognise risks, take preventive action and support the move towards a safer, asbestos-free environment.

KNOWLEDGE INSPIRES ACTION. ACTION SAVES LIVES.

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CONSUMERS' ASSOCIATION OF PENANG



WHAT IS ASBESTOS

Asbestos is a naturally occurring mineral composed of very fine, strong fibres. It is found in the earth and mined like other minerals. These fibres are extremely thin, sometimes invisible to the naked eye, yet highly durable. They can be woven, mixed with cement or added to other materials. Because of these properties, asbestos was widely used in products such as roof sheets, floor tiles, insulation and fireproof materials. However, exposure to asbestos fibres can be harmful to health, especially when the fibres are released into the air and breathed in.

According to WHO (2024), asbestos is responsible for 70% of deaths from all occupational cancers globally. More than 70 countries have fully banned all types of asbestos due to the devastating health impacts of exposure to the fibre. The International Agency for Research on Cancer classifies all forms of asbestos, including chrysotile (white asbestos), as carcinogenic to humans (Group 1).

Why **Asbestos** Was Used in the Past



1. Heat-Resistant

Asbestos can withstand very high temperatures without melting. It was used in ovens, boilers, hot water pipes and roofs to protect against heat.



2. Fireproof

Asbestos does not burn easily. It was widely used for fire safety in buildings, shipbuilding, electrical wiring, fire doors, brake pads and protective clothing.



3. Strong and Durable

The fibres are strong and resistant to weather and chemicals. This made asbestos suitable for cement sheets, floor tiles, water pipes and building structures.



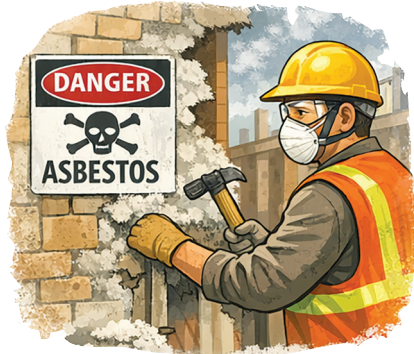
4. Effective Insulation (Heat and Sound)

Asbestos fibres trap heat and absorb sound, so they were used in buildings and machinery to control temperature and noise.



Asbestos in Workplaces

Workers in certain industries are at a higher risk of asbestos exposure due to the nature of their jobs. Among them are migrant and informal workers.



CONSTRUCTION WORKERS may encounter asbestos in old buildings during demolition or renovation, especially in insulation, roofing or cement materials.



SHIPYARD WORKERS face exposure from insulation, flooring and other ship components containing asbestos.



FACTORY WORKERS handling products made with asbestos, such as brakes, pipes or heat-resistant materials, are also vulnerable.



MECHANICS are exposed to asbestos from brake pads, clutches and gaskets which release microscopic fibres during servicing.

Most Common Products that Contain Asbestos



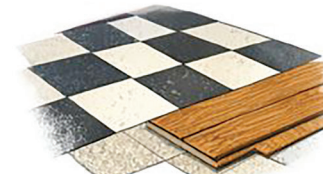
Roofing sheets and shingles



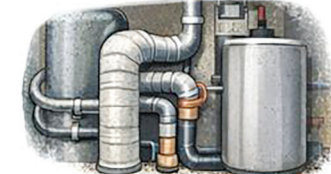
Asbestos cement pipes and water tanks



Wall panels, ceiling boards and partition boards



Floor tiles and vinyl flooring



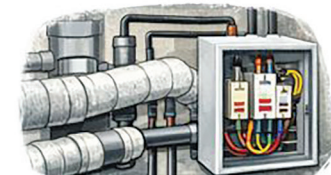
Insulation for pipes, boilers and hot water systems



Brake pads and clutch plates



Gaskets, seals and fireproof fabrics



Electrical insulation and fuse boxes

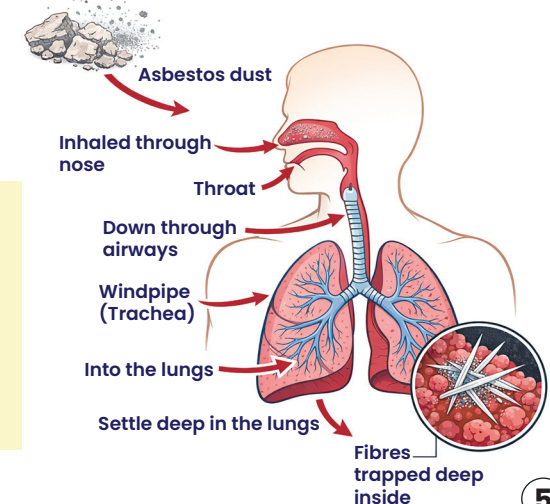


Spray-on fireproofing materials



Textured paints and coatings

Image of How Asbestos Dust Enters the Body Down the Airways



When these materials are damaged, cut, drilled or deteriorate with age, **asbestos fibres** can be released into the air and inhaled.

Why Is Asbestos Dangerous?

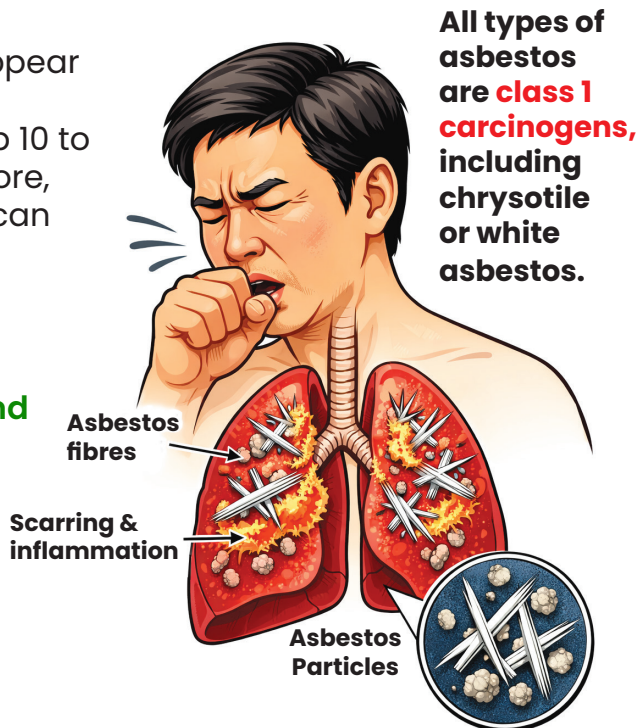
When materials containing asbestos are cut, broken, drilled, damaged or even worn out over time, tiny fibres become airborne. These fibres are so small that they cannot be seen or smelled. People may breathe them in without realising it.



Once asbestos is inhaled, the fibres get trapped deep inside the lungs and the body cannot remove them easily. Over time, they cause inflammation, scarring and damage to lung tissue.

The effects do not appear immediately. Serious illnesses may develop 10 to 40 years later. Therefore, even short exposure can be dangerous.

According to the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) eliminating asbestos use is the most effective way to prevent asbestos-related diseases.

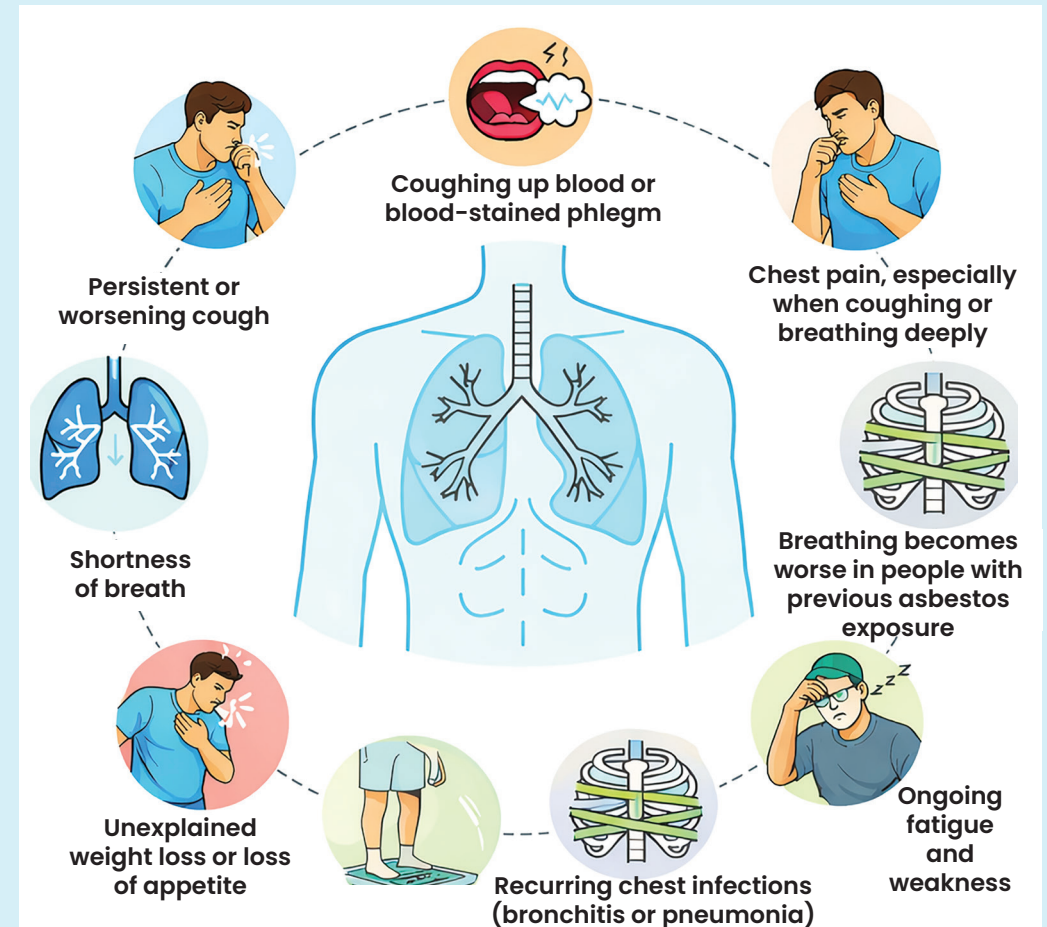


All types of asbestos are **class 1 carcinogens**, including chrysotile or white asbestos.

Lung Cancer

Lung Cancer is a most common disease caused by asbestos exposure.

- Construction, renovation, demolition, manufacturing and maintenance workers are at high risk, as are family members exposed through contaminated clothing.
- Inhaled asbestos fibres lodge deep in the lungs, causing long-term inflammation and damage that can lead to lung cancer.
- People who smoke and are exposed to asbestos face a much higher lung cancer risk.



Mesothelioma

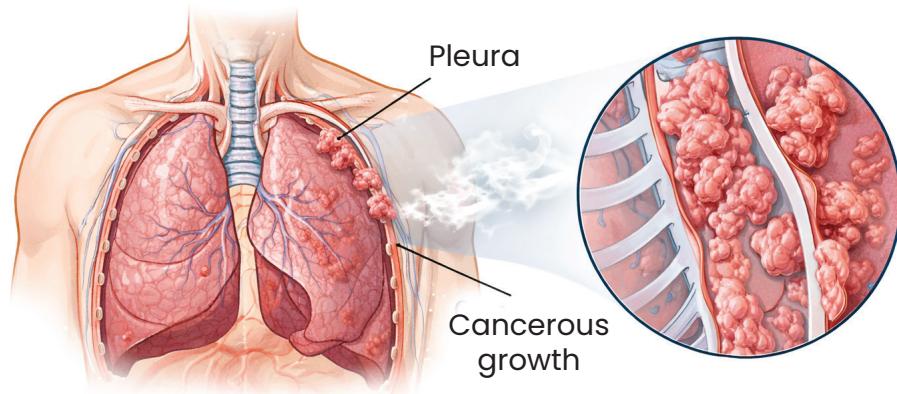
Deadly, Rare Cancer Caused by Asbestos

Why it's the Most Dangerous

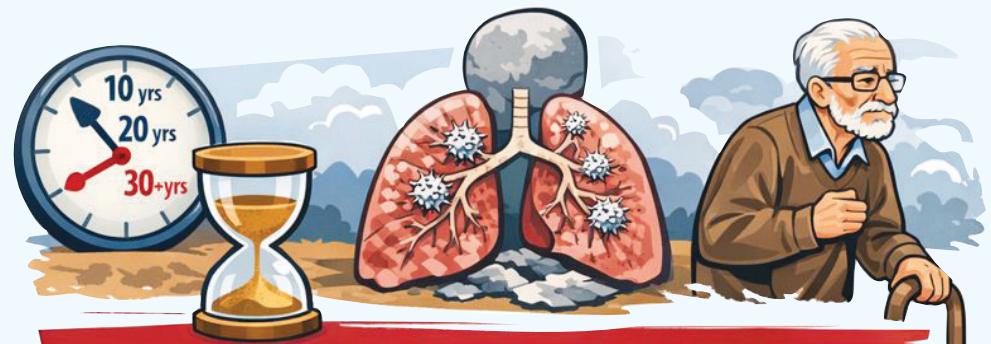


- It is almost exclusively caused by asbestos.
- It is aggressive and often fatal, with limited treatment options.
- It develops very slowly, with symptoms often appearing 20 to 50 years after exposure.
- Even low levels of exposure can trigger it.

Pleural Mesothelioma

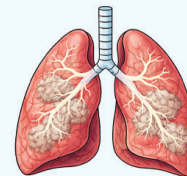


Pleural mesothelioma is a serious and rare cancer that affects the pleura, which is the thin lining surrounding the lungs and the inside of the chest wall.

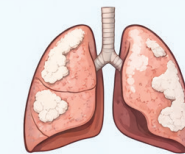


There is no safe level of asbestos exposure. Even low or short-term exposure to asbestos can cause serious health risks! Once asbestos fibres are inhaled, they can remain trapped in the lungs and body tissues for life, causing damage that may only appear decades later.

Other Asbestos Related Diseases



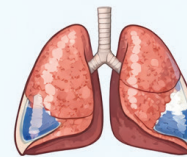
Asbestosis



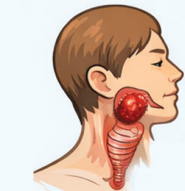
Pleural plaques



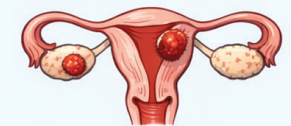
Diffuse pleural thickening



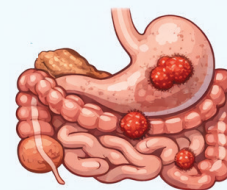
Pleural effusion



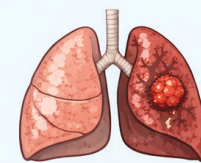
Laryngeal (throat) cancer



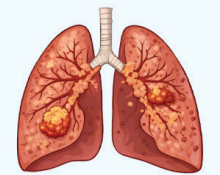
Ovarian cancer



Gastrointestinal cancers (including stomach and colorectal cancer)



Atelectasis (partial lung collapse linked to pleural disease)



Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) – asbestos can worsen or contribute to it

Non-workplace **Asbestos** Exposure

Non-workplace asbestos exposure refers to contact with asbestos outside factories, mines or industrial jobs. Many people are exposed unknowingly in everyday environments.



Old Building Materials at Home

Many older homes contain asbestos in roofs, ceilings, walls and floor tiles. As these materials age or crack, invisible fibres are released into the air and can be inhaled.

Home Renovation and Repair Work

Activities such as drilling, cutting or breaking old materials can disturb asbestos. This releases fine fibres that can be breathed in without being noticed.



Asbestos Brought Home on Clothing

Workers exposed to asbestos can carry fibres home on clothes, hair or shoes. Family members may breathe in these fibres during daily activities at home.

Vehicles and Old Household Items

Older vehicles may contain asbestos in brake and clutch parts. Handling or repairing these parts can release asbestos fibres into the air.



How to Identify if Your Roof Contains **Asbestos**

AGED & WEATHERED
Cracked, lichen and moss growth

FIBROUS TEXTURE
Cement-like corrugated sheets

LABELS AND WARNING
DANGER
CONTAINS ASBESTOS
Look for warning labels

SURFACE DAMAGE
Powdery residue
Older homes at higher risk

ASBESTOS FIBRES

GET PROFESSIONAL TESTING

Asbestos in Waterways and the Environment

Illegal dumping of asbestos waste

Wind spreads asbestos dust through the air

Polluted river

Runoff into rivers and drains

Contaminated soil

Farming on tainted land

Inhalation of asbestos fibres

Chrysotile asbestos, also known as white asbestos, is the most commonly used form of asbestos worldwide. Although some claim it is safer than other types, **WHO and ILO confirm that chrysotile is also dangerous and carcinogenic.**

Dangers of Chrysotile (White Asbestos)

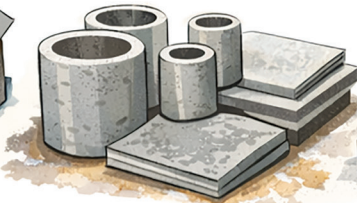


Chrysotile fibres:

- Can break into very fine, breathable fibres.
- Are easily inhaled deep into the lungs.
- Can cause lung cancer, mesothelioma and asbestosis.



Roofing sheets



Cement Products



Industrial components

Despite these known dangers, chrysotile asbestos is still imported and used in some countries, including Malaysia, mainly in products such as roofing sheets, cement materials and industrial components.

Talc-based Products May Contain Asbestos



The Consumers' Association of Penang (CAP) has raised serious concerns about the health risks of talcum powder, particularly when contaminated with asbestos. Talcum powder is made from **talc, a mineral similar to asbestos** that has been linked to cancer and respiratory problems.

Talc particles have been found in ovarian tumours, raising concerns about a possible link between **talcum powder use** and **ovarian cancer**.

Tiny talc particles can be inhaled into the lungs, causing irritation and **respiratory problems**, especially in babies and young children.

Recent studies suggest that some talc-based cosmetics may contain asbestos-like fibres.

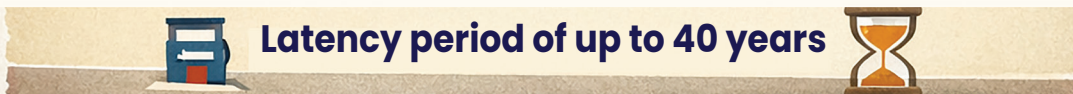
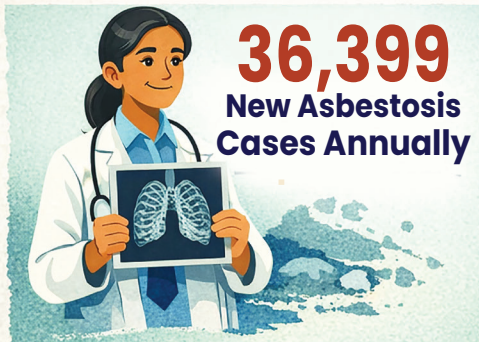


The Consumers' Association of Penang continuously raises public awareness about asbestos-contaminated talc products.

CAP has called on the Ministry of Health to ban talc-based products and urges consumers to choose safer alternatives such as cornstarch or rice powder.



The Deadly Toll of Asbestos Exposure



Current Status of Asbestos in Malaysia

BANNED ASBESTOS

AMPHIBOLES

- Amosite (brown asbestos)
- Crocidolite (blue asbestos)
- Tremolite
- Actinolite
- Anthophyllite



PHASE DOWN IN PROGRESS

The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Sustainability is considering a gradual phase-down of **chrysotile** use.



New laws have to be drafted to support the ban and improve existing regulations.

CHRYSTILE (WHITE ASBESTOS)

Controlled Use.



NGOs

PUSH FOR TOTAL BAN BY 2027



National Asbestos Ban (as of 29 Sept 2025)

Algeria	Estonia	Jordan	Portugal
Argentina	Finland	Korea (South)	Qatar
Australia	France	Kuwait	Romania
Austria	Gabon	Latvia	Saudi Arabia
Bahrain	Germany	Liechtenstein	Serbia
Belgium	Gibraltar	Lithuania	Seychelles
Brazil	Greece	Luxembourg	Slovakia
Brunei	Greenland	Macedonia	Slovenia
Bulgaria	Honduras	Malta	South Africa
Canada	Hungary	Mauritius	Spain
Chile	Iceland	Monaco	Sweden
Colombia	Iran	Mozambique	Switzerland
Croatia	Iraq	Netherlands	Taiwan
Cyprus	Ireland	New Caledonia	Turkey
Czech Republic	Israel	New Zealand	Ukraine
Denmark	Italy	Norway	United Kingdom
Djibouti	Ivory Coast	Oman	United States
Egypt	Japan	Poland	Uruguay

Source : International Ban Asbestos Secretariat

Stay away from Asbestos Hazards

Asbestos materials can release dangerous fibres into the air when they are cracked, cut or drilled.



DO NOT

Disturb old roofing, ceiling boards, wall panels or insulation building materials.



Cut, drill, sand or break materials that may contain asbestos.



Sweep, vacuum or dry-brush asbestos dust, as this spreads fibres into the air.



Remove asbestos yourself without proper training and protective equipment.



Dump asbestos waste in household bins or open areas.

Ignore warning signs in old buildings, factories or construction sites.

Assume materials are safe just because they look new.

If asbestos is suspected, leave it undisturbed and seek professional help.

Alternatives to Asbestos

Fibreglass

Lightweight, heat-resistant insulation. Safer than asbestos. Commonly used in walls and ceilings to reduce heat transfer.



Mineral Wool

Heat and sound resistant. Used in building insulation. Made from natural rock or industrial by-products.



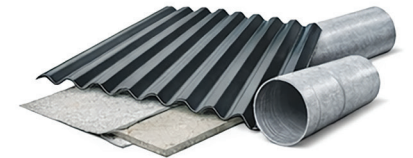
Cellulose Fibres

Made from recycled paper. used in insulation. Environmentally friendly and effective in reducing waste and improving insulation.



Thermoset Plastics

A safe alternative to asbestos in roofing, cement sheets and pipes. Remains stable under high temperatures without releasing hazardous fibres.



Cement Fibre Boards

Made from Portland cement and cellulose fibres. Safe for construction. Commonly used for wall panels, ceilings and exterior cladding.

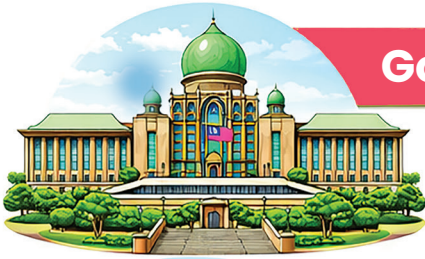


Polyurethane Foam

Used as an alternative to asbestos-containing materials for insulation. Helps seal gaps and reduce heat loss.



Asbestos Awareness in Malaysia



Government Review

The government is considering phasing out and banning asbestos to protect health and the environment.



Workplace Awareness

DOSH includes asbestos in workplace safety rules, requiring employers and workers to follow safety procedures.



Training and Courses

Private organisations offer asbestos awareness and safe handling training, covering identification, health risks and protective practices.



Online Resources

Programmes like NEHAP Malaysia provide guidance on safe asbestos management for construction and removal work to protect workers and the public.



Transportation

Asbestos waste transportation, management and disposal must comply with Environmental Quality (Scheduled Wastes) Regulations 2005.

Asbestos Awareness Programmes Worldwide

Asbestos awareness programmes are carried out worldwide to educate people about the dangers of asbestos and prevent asbestos-related diseases.

Global Asbestos Awareness Week (1–7 April) highlights the risks of asbestos and promotes prevention.

The World Health Organization (WHO) and International Labour Organization (ILO) support countries through guidelines, training and policies to eliminate asbestos-related diseases.

APHEDA (Union Aid Abroad) works with workers and communities to campaign for an asbestos ban, raise awareness of its dangers and promote safer alternatives.

These efforts aim to reduce exposure and protect public health worldwide.

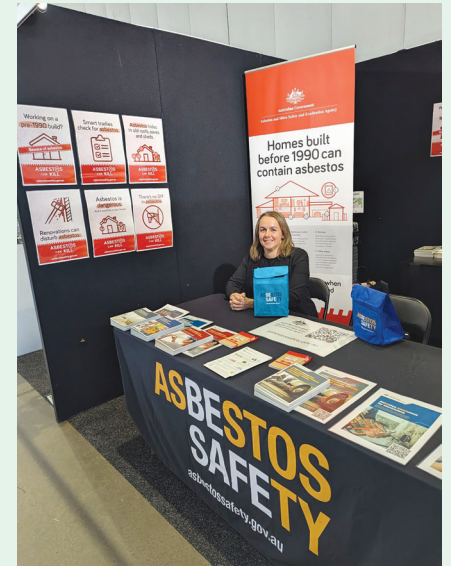


Photo Credit for this National Asbestos Awareness Campaigns by the Asbestos and Silica Safety and Eradication Agency in Australia.



LION Indonesia, in collaboration with the Regional Disaster Management Agency (BPBD) Jakarta City, held Asbestos Exposure Prevention Training for Disaster Volunteers in Jakarta.



Members of the Building and Wood Workers Trade Union in Cambodia campaigning against asbestos. Photo: BWTUC/Facebook



Asbestos eradication activists and consumer groups rallying outside the court in Jakarta, Indonesia. Photo Credit: IBAN.