



ACTION MESOTHELIOMA DAY 27 FEB, 2008



Evans Fielding



Fred Ogden



Michael Eason



Frank Parden



Hugh Haskins

**Joiner
(dead)**

**Electrician
(dead)**

**Electrician
(dead)**

**Joiner
(dead)**

**Plasterer
(dead)**

Wednesday, February 27, 2008

Press Release

Campaigners today warned thousands of the North West's tradesmen face a devastating death from the lung cancer, mesothelioma if more is not done to raise awareness about the dangers of asbestos.

The Greater Manchester Asbestos Victims Support Group supported the Health and Safety Executive's campaign to raise awareness about asbestos among maintenance workers but said more needed to be done.

The group, which gives support and advice to those affected by asbestos related disease, spoke out during Action Mesothelioma Day.

The event aims to raise awareness about mesothelioma, a cancer of the lining of the lung caused by exposure to asbestos. There is no cure for the disease, which is diagnosed in nearly two people every week in the Greater Manchester area.

We have seen 22 newly diagnosed mesothelioma patients since 2nd January 2008:

Asbestos lies dormant in the lungs for decades before developing into mesothelioma. Once diagnosed many sufferers have just months to live.

Nationally the HSE has launched a campaign to generate awareness of the dangers of asbestos among maintenance workers.

But the Greater Manchester Support Group has called for the campaign to be properly resourced and to include simple, clear and practical advice to vulnerable construction maintenance workers to avoid further deaths.

It has also asked for a television advertising campaign on the issue and for the free distribution of the HSE's '*Asbestos Essentials*' guidance in working safely with asbestos.

More than 67,400 construction workers in the North West are in danger of developing mesothelioma. Including 8,000 plumbers and electricians many of whom are routinely exposed to asbestos.

Last year 220 people were diagnosed with asbestos related diseases in Greater Manchester, including 89 people who were diagnosed with mesothelioma.

The group also warns that thousands of buildings, including schools, in the North West still contain asbestos, specifically those built before 2000.

It calls for the phased removal of all asbestos from schools or the rebuild of all schools containing asbestos to avoid a new generation of people dying from mesothelioma.

Spokesperson for the Greater Manchester Asbestos Support Group, Tony Whitston said: "Many believe that asbestos is a problem which was faced by shipyard workers and ladders decades ago. But asbestos is still a danger for our tradesmen today. We must do everything we can to ensure that our plumbers, joiners, electricians, fitters and construction workers are aware of the risks they face from asbestos.

"If we do not act now a whole new generation of people will develop mesothelioma in 30 years time."

He added: "We whole heartedly support the Health and Safety Executive's campaign but we would call for it to go further and for it to be backed up by television advertising and a greater information-led campaign to ensure the message hits home."

Nigel Bryson, Health and Safety Consultant and past GMB Health and Safety Specialist said:

"Asbestos is known to be a killer of building maintenance workers. The main risk is from Mesothelioma, an entirely preventable disease. Controls to prevent exposure to asbestos fibres are well known. They must be applied: building workers lives depend on it."

John Howe, a joiner, who has mesothelioma said:

"I, like so many other tradesmen, was exposed to asbestos in the past and many of us are now paying a terrible price. It is unforgivable that young workers today continue to be exposed to asbestos. No cost should be spared in preventing further exposure to this deadly dust."

Case studies and further statistics including a regional breakdown of the number of people affected by mesothelioma are available.

For more contact Tony Whitston on 0161 636 7555 or 07768227476.

Notes to Editors

1. Mesothelioma is a fatal cancer found in the lung pleura. Life expectancy from diagnosis is around 12 months. Asbestos is the only known cause of mesothelioma.
2. The number of deaths from mesothelioma is not expected to peak until between 2011 and 2015 at around 1950 and 2450 deaths.
3. There were 2037 mesothelioma deaths in 2005, including 1000 tradesmen.

4. Between 1996 and 2000, 69 former teachers died from mesothelioma
5. In 2007, 220 people in Greater Manchester were diagnosed with asbestos related diseases.
6. The HSE estimate that 1.8m workers are likely to disturb asbestos during routine work activity and 85,000 workers are routinely exposed to high levels of asbestos. More than 8,000 people are predicted to die if there is a continued failure to comply with asbestos regulations.