

Bulletin 494 - 11/06 - Asbestos in Dunnage - China

A Member's ship recently loaded steel coils at a port in Northern China and pieces of asbestos matting was found with the cargo.

The asbestos was discovered prior to discharge at a port in Europe and the Club is presently assisting the Member in minimising health risks associated with contact with the asbestos as well as the consequential financial aspects of the contamination.



The Club's local correspondent was appointed and on investigation it was found that asbestos matting was mixed with straw and used as dunnage for the transfer of the cargo from the storage yard to the port facility. Pieces of the matting attached themselves to the cargo during loading on to the ship. Worryingly, the investigator observed further shipments of the cargo waiting to be loaded on to ships in the same condition.

If crew see woven matting such as that pictured below, loading should cease and advice immediately sought on how to assess if the matting contains asbestos. If asbestos is found to be present, it should not be handled by the ship's crew, but arrangements should be made for the matting to be safely removed. The Club's correspondents should be involved to assist ship's crew.



The type of asbestos found on the entered ship is chrysotile, which can be woven into insulating mats but breaks into straw-like strings.

Asbestos is the greatest single cause of work related deaths in the UK. There are numerous resources about asbestos and information can be found online on the UK government's Health & Safety Executive website www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/.

Source of information: Christopher Brown
Thomas Miller (Hong Kong) Ltd.
Phone: +852 2832 9301
Email: Christopher.brown@thomasmiller.com