

Peak Oil & mesothelioma - how to ease two problems at once

Oil is the largest contributor to the world's energy production and seen as fundamental for powering the modern society. Oil is also a finite natural resource and produced barrel less oil remains. As the society is dependent on oil the point where production no longer can increase, peak oil, is of great importance. Peak oil will affect transportation, economy, industry, trade and all parts of the modern society, as oil is an enormously integrated factor for virtually everything. The use of oil also has other aspects, for instance as a cause of environmental problems and hazards. Among them a medical condition known as mesothelioma, a fatal form of cancer that can affect oil refinery workers.

In order to create gasoline, diesel fuels and other products from crude oil it must first be refined at an oil refinery. There have always been concerns surrounding the safety of oil refinery workers. High heat and flammable materials may lead to fire or explosions, putting workers at risk for bodily injury or even death. There is another health and safety issue that one may not consider, however, and that is the presence of asbestos. Asbestos is the only conclusive cause of [pleural mesothelioma](#), a fatal cancer that attacks the lungs and presently has no cure.

Asbestos was widely used due to its superb insulating capabilities and may be found in oil refineries within piping, tanks, boilers, reactors, furnaces, and pumps in the form of insulation. Additionally, [asbestos](#) may also be found in roofing tiles, floor or ceiling tiles, drywall, plaster, and even duct tape. If these materials are damaged (whether it is from a fire or other disturbance, such as a renovation projects) they may release extremely tiny asbestos fibers into the air, putting workers at risk for inhalation.

If inhaled, the claw-like composition of asbestos fibers allow them to cling to the pleural lining of the lungs for up to fifty years before an individual may experience the symptoms commonly associated with [mesothelioma](#), including breathing troubles and chronic cough. Due to the extremely lengthy latent period of mesothelioma, an individual may not be diagnosed for decades after their initial asbestos exposure. Once diagnosed, the majority of mesothelioma sufferers will succumb to this aggressive form of cancer in less than two years. The survival rate associated with mesothelioma cancer is less than one percent. [Oil refinery](#) workers, past and present, should consult with a doctor to determine whether or not they have inhaled dangerously high levels of asbestos.

The threat of asbestos is one of the problems related to oil dependence. Oil refineries are not only a potentially dangerous place to work, with fires, explosions and similar accidents as obvious health and environmental risks. Also less obvious risks, such as toxic gas and vapors emissions from oil refineries may have lead to many people being exposed to hazardous chemicals (as well as asbestos fibers) without ever knowing it.

We can no longer afford to rely on oil refining processes that endanger our lives and decrease our quality of life. There is no better time than now to consider alternative energy sources, including the implementation of clean, natural solar energy and alternative fuel for our vehicles. Not only does a reduction of the oil dependence help mitigate the problems imposed by peak oil, as it also will be leading to better health and reducing causes of mesothelioma.

The Mesothelioma & Asbestos Awareness Center is the web's foremost resource for information related to occupational asbestos exposure and mesothelioma. For further information, please visit the MAACenter website, www.maacenter.org.