

# Time to ban asbestos? Merkley and Bonamici think so

Oregon U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley and U.S. Rep Suzanne Bonamici are sponsoring bills to ban the use of asbestos. Yes, asbestos.

"It's outrageous that in the year 2018, asbestos is still allowed in the United States," said Merkley, a Democrat. "It's time for us to catch up to the rest of the developed world, and ban this dangerous public health threat once and for all."

Asbestos — a known carcinogen — is a fiber that is still found in insulation and fireproofing materials in homes, commercial buildings, and common products such as paint and construction materials. Each year, as many as 15,000 people die from asbestos-related diseases, and 3,000 people are diagnosed with mesothelioma, a deadly form of cancer typically caused by exposure to asbestos. Asbestos-related diseases typically take decades to develop. Mesothelioma, for example, has a latency period of 20 to 50 years.

The U.S. is the only western industrialized nation that has not banned asbestos.

Following a push in 2015 from unions and federal labor advocates, the Canadian government passed a bill in 2016 to ban asbestos by the end of this year. Asbestos is the leading cause of workplace-related death in Canada.

In 2016, the U.S. Congress passed the Toxic Substances Control Act, which required the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to undertake a safety assessment of asbestos. The agency included asbestos on its list of the first 10 chemicals for risk reviews under the Act, but its safety assessment must be completed before EPA can consider any controls on asbestos, and the EPA is not required to

ban it.

That assessment still has not been completed.

Last November, Merkley joined with seven Democratic senators to introduce the Alan Reinstein Ban Asbestos Now Act. The bill is named after Alan Reinstein, who passed away in 2006 at the age of 66 from mesothelioma, a disease caused by exposure to asbestos. Alan's wife, Linda, co-founded the Asbestos Disease Awareness Organization (ADAO) in 2004.

In February, Bonamici, a Democrat, introduced a companion bill in the U.S. House. Also named the Alan Reinstein Ban Asbestos Now Act, the bill requires the EPA to complete its assessment, and within 18 months would prohibit the man-

ufacture, processing, use, distribution in commerce, and disposal of asbestos.

"Congress and the EPA must immediately work together to protect the health of our communities from this known carcinogen," Bonamici said in a press statement.

Linda Reinstein of ADAO says asbestos imports are on the rise. "The chemical industry continues shamefully to seek a way to profit from a known carcinogen, putting the lives of miners from other countries at risk, as well as those exposed during and after production."

On April 13, both Merkley and Bonamici were presented "The Tribute of Hope Award" by the ADAO for their "steadfast commitment to awareness, prevention, and policy to eliminate asbestos-related diseases."

Both lawmakers said they continue to look for Republican co-sponsors to partner up on the bill to get it passed.

*"It's outrageous that in the year 2018, asbestos is still allowed in the United States."*

— U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley

## Examples of asbestos-containing products that are currently legal

Incredibly, it's currently legal in the United States to manufacture, import, process and distribute the following products containing asbestos (as well as some others not listed.)

- Cement corrugated sheet
- Vinyl floor tile
- Clutch facings
- Gaskets
- Cement flat sheet
- Cement shingle
- Friction materials
- Non-roofing coatings
- Clothing
- Millboard
- Disk brake pads
- Roof coatings
- Pipeline wrap
- Cement pipe
- Drum brake linings
- Automatic transmission components
- Brake blocks

## Glazier Apprenticeship Accepting Applications

The Oregon & SW Washington Glaziers, Architectural Metal & Glass Workers Joint Apprenticeship & Journeyman Training Program will be open to accept applications to create a pool of eligible applicants. Applicants must be at least 18 years old. Must apply in person and furnish a copy of a high school diploma and grade transcript or GED and test scores at time of application.


**Applications will be taken**  
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Monday through Friday,  
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*Women and minorities are encouraged to apply.  
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