

Promotion of improvement action for prevention of asbestos exposure by cooperation between trade unions and NGO

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80-90% of imported total 10 million metric tons asbestos was used for construction materials in Japan. Many kind and enormous amount of asbestos construction materials were produced and greater part of them remain in buildings, facilities and houses still now. Construction workers have been exposed asbestos before now and they will be exposed in the future continuously, if effective measures for prevention of asbestos exposure would not be taken. Tokyo regional organization of General Federation of Construction Worker's Union and Tokyo Occupational Safety and Health Center, NGO have been trying to protect workers from asbestos related diseases and prevent them from exposure of asbestos applying practical methods. The methods include three aspects, 1)medical check-up for early detection of asbestos diseases, 2)education to trade union members and 3)organizing improvement activities focusing on workplace improvement.

1) Medical check -up was started from 1996. Around 40,000 workers' chest X-ray were examined in 2000-2007. 1% of construction workers has obvious pneumoconiosis. Most of them got compensation from the public insurance system. 17.6% has slight pneumoconiosis. The findings of pleural plaques Amount to 7.3%.

2)Education has been implemented as a training course for asbestos work supervisors 40 times and around 2000 workers completed the training course. In the two days training course, many data of air-borne asbestos concentration during asbestos related operation and improvement pictures are shown.

3)Aims of the improvement activity are a)improving workplace environment, safety, health and productivity at small construction sites, b)promoting voluntary practices of construction workers and c)promoting the activity through the trade union network. Simple tools including an action checklist

were provided and splayed to local unions with methodology of the activity. In 2006 seven local unions applied the activity.

The series of activities, total actions for research, education, compensation and improvement were implemented. 1)Research for excavating victims of asbestos and supporting them to get compensation, 2)trying to improve total condition of construction workers and situating prevention of asbestos exposure into it, 3)promoting voluntary action of construction workers, are important to introduce and develop the activities.