

# Canada to ban asbestos by 2018

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Once the world's top producer of asbestos, Canada said Thursday it will ban the heat-resistant fibrous mineral that is woven into building and other materials but which has been found to cause cancer.

In a statement, government ministers of health, science and the environment said the "comprehensive ban" will prohibit the "manufacture, use, import and export of asbestos," starting in 2018.

This comes after Ottawa in 2012 lifted its longtime opposition to listing asbestos as a hazardous material under the UN Rotterdam Convention, following the closure of its last two asbestos mines.

"There is irrefutable evidence that has led us to take concrete action to ban asbestos," Science Minister Kristy Duncan said.

Opposition parties, as well as health and labor groups supported the long-awaited announcement, pointing out recently that asbestos exposure is the number one cause of occupational death in Canada, responsible for about one third of all workplace deaths.

At the height of its use, asbestos was found in more than 3,000 applications worldwide. However, production and use have declined since the 1970s.

In 1987, the World Health Organization's International Agency for Research on Cancer declared it a human carcinogen.

The Canadian Labour Congress said last month more than 2,000 people die every year in this country from disease caused by exposure to asbestos.

The WHO has put the global death toll at more than 100,000.

Canada once dominated world production of asbestos but the closure of two Quebec mines in 2012 marked the suspension of its production for the first time in 130 years.

It continues to be imported in some goods.

Nearly 60 countries have banned asbestos, but not China, Russia, India, or Brazil. The United States has a partial ban in place.

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