



OCCUPATIONAL & ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH NETWORK OF INDIA

2-09-2017

To,
Chief Minister
Sachivalaya,
Gandhinagar

Subject: Rehabilitation of flood affected areas of North Gujarat

Hon'ble Chief Minister,

Gujarat has faced unprecedented flooding as the districts like Banaskantha, Sabarkantha, Arvalli are worse affected in the month of July. It is a major challenge for Government to rehabilitate entire villages as thousands of homes have destroyed. But we all know that it'll be done in the best way it can be under your commendable leadership.

Nature has given us this wonderful opportunity to save people of this area from unnoticed poisonous substance. Generally it is seen that while rehabilitating the villages asbestos cement sheets are being used as roofing which can bring negative results for the society in the long run.

Asbestos fibers are extremely toxic for the health. A person who is exposed to asbestos can be afflicted with fatal lung disease called asbestosis. It can also lead to lung cancer, cancer of mesothelioma, cancer of vocal cord, anus cancer, pleural plaques etc. Keeping in mind its toxicity 61 countries in the world have either completely banned or restricted its use. Even our neighbouring countries Nepal and Sri Lanka have declared ban on asbestos in their countries. As stated on World Health Organization's website, "Safe and controlled use of Asbestos (chrysotile) is not possible. The most efficient way to eliminate asbestos-related diseases is to stop the use of all types of asbestos." (http://www.who.int/ipcs/assessment/public_health/asbestos/en/)

Using available scientific information on the substance, we need to take urgent policy decision for the protection of health of our people. This can be expected from the compassionate leader like you only. We request you to take appropriate steps and instructions to the appropriate authorities engaged in rehabilitation so that use of asbestos cement sheets is not done. Indian Railways has taken this decision way back and now you will observe that asbestos cement sheets are being replaced from every railway platforms. I also wish to draw your attention towards the recent verdict by Kolkata High court. (<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/Kolkata/CJ-orders-removal-of-asbestos-from-high-court-roof/articleshow/53560316.cms>). As a result of this order, state of West Bengal may lead to be asbestos free state.

Gujarat being progressive state can restrict its usage in the upcoming constructions by Government of Gujarat and rehabilitations.

Thank you

Jagdish Patel,
National Coordinator