

Asbestos exposure in the workplace continues to be a problem for tens of thousands of American workers. Two U.S. senators from Montana, Democrat Jon Tester and Republican Steve Daines passed Senate Resolution 98 designating April as National Asbestos Awareness Month.

Each year an estimated 15,000 American workers die from preventable asbestos-caused diseases and the resolution was passed in advance of a forthcoming United States surgeon general warning that will hopefully raise awareness about asbestos hazards and save lives.

The Centers for Disease Control published a study in March 2017, which concluded that there were more than 45,000 deaths in the United States in the last 15 years, from 1999 through 2015 due to the asbestos caused cancer malignant mesothelioma. Deaths from mesothelioma increased from fewer than 2,500 in 1999 to nearly 2,600 in 2015, going as high in 2012 as almost 2,900. The CDC report can be read at

<https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/66/wr/pdfs/mm6608a3.pdf>.

Senators Tester and Daines urged the U.S. Surgeon General to warn and educate the public about asbestos exposure hazards.

"Too many folks have suffered and lost their lives to asbestos poisoning," said Tester. "By making education and awareness a priority, we can protect our families from these life-threatening diseases."

Asbestos-containing materials from decades ago are still being found inside and outside of industrial buildings, offices, and homes. As the asbestos-containing materials age and become "friable," they can release airborne asbestos dust that can be a health hazard. Anytime asbestos-containing material is disturbed during work, repairs, or demolition workers are at risk of inhaling hazardous asbestos fibers that may cause lung disease.