

# Shedding light on the asbestos crisis to prevent future damage internationally

## Keywords

Asbestos  
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Interdisciplinary Research  
Complex Stock Disaster



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## Damage from asbestos crisis set to continue

Occupational and environmental damages caused by asbestos is the most serious case of industrial pollution in history, and is an urgent issue facing humankind on a global scale. Health problems resulting from exposure to asbestos can take anything from 15 to 40 years to manifest. This asbestos pollution is a "complex stock disaster", in that asbestos causes damage at every constituent economic part of its life cycle, from production to distribution, consumption, and disposal; it also damages at length, without degrading.

In developed nations, where asbestos has been used for many years, the focus today is on regulating its use and establishing systems for compensating and assisting victims. However, mass consumption



of asbestos continues throughout Asia and other developing regions, where the damage is steadily growing. A solution is urgently needed to prevent the extensive damage which will otherwise be inevitable.

## Highlighting and communicating worldwide the realities of asbestos damage

The first aim of this project is to shed light on the realities and mechanisms of asbestos damage, both in Japan and worldwide. Victim relief systems can only truly be developed once we have established the causes of asbestos damage, and the parties responsible. To this end, we will perform interdisciplinary analyses, based on fieldwork results, on matters including the state of asbestos use; location, production, and trading statuses of asbestos-related firms; conditions of asbestos pollution; official labor and environmental policies; and social welfare systems in each respective region.

Asbestos has been primarily used as building materials, and thus one study involved an investigation of asbestos damage and its causes among construction workers. We are also conducting a study of the neighborhood around the former Kubota Kanzaki plant, in Amagasaki City, where


one of the world's most serious environmental exposure incidents occurred.

We are also performing studies of asbestos damage and government countermeasures in other Asian countries. Asbestos-related firms moved their activities from Japan, which underwent economic growth and introduced asbestos regulations earlier than other nations, to South Korea, and onto Indonesia and China. We also discovered that asbestos legislation in South Korea and Taiwan is primarily based on Japanese regulations. Further, the policies of certain Asian countries that continue to allow the use of asbestos mirror Japan's own experiences during the period of high economic growth.

We therefore believe that our next role is to communicate Japan's experiences and our findings from various studies to an international audience, particularly to the Asian region.

## Establishing a system for damage prevention and victim assistance

We will look at various international economic and social situations in detail, as well as at public systems, in order to clarify what diversity and similarity exists in damage and public systems. This will contribute to the further development of Japan's system.

Our project will take an interdisciplinary approach, involving political science, administrative science, fiscal science, economics, law, architecture, and medicine, to respond to diverse issues. Other complex stock disasters, such as soil contamination, will occur in the future. We believe that our research is the key to establishing systems for disaster prevention and victim assistance, and it is this belief that drives our research forward. 

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