

## California asbestos scrutiny

Everyday exposure to naturally occurring asbestos increases the risk of developing lung cancer, according to research from the University of California's UC Davis College. The study, to be published in the American Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine, could have implications for damage claims over manufactured asbestos exposure.

Manufactured asbestos in the workplace, particularly in shipyards, has long been recognised as a risk factor for mesothelioma. But UC Davis researchers claim to have found a consistent and dose-dependent association between mesothelioma and living near ultramafic rocks, the predominant source of naturally occurring asbestos. The researchers found that the risk of developing malignant mesothelioma fell by 6.3% for every 10 kilometers a person lived away from the nearest ultramafic rock asbestos source.

“Our findings indicate that the risks from exposure to naturally occurring asbestos, while low, are real and should be taken seriously,” said Marc Schenker, professor and author of the study. He added, “this study provides important supportive evidence that naturally occurring asbestos causes mesothelioma – and public efforts should now shift to understanding the risk and how we can protect people from this preventable malignancy”.