

Pleural Plaques: The Truth

- Pleural Plaques are a scarring of the lungs caused by heavy and prolonged exposure to asbestos.
- On the 17th October 2007 the House of Lords ruled that pleural plaques would no longer be a compensatable medical condition
- The insurance industry has been lobbying for years to remove Pleural Plaques as a compensatable industrial disease in order to reduce payments.
- There can be up to two decades between a diagnosis of pleural plaques and the onset of other asbestos related disease
- Before the House of Lords ruling a prior diagnosis of Pleural Plaques meant that, if a victim later developed the incurable lung disease mesothelioma, the victim could receive compensation before their death.
- The Lords' ruling will now mean that most mesothelioma victims will not receive compensation during their lifetime, increasing their mental and physical suffering

Dear Mr. Straw

On 17th October 2007 the House of Lords held that asbestos related Pleural Plaques would no longer constitute a compensatable medical condition.

Prior to this ruling a successful claim following a diagnosis of Pleural Plaques guaranteed the person concerned a small compensation payment. This gave the worker and his/her dependents security should they develop one of the serious complications in later life. The insurers would be identified and judgement obtained. If the worker developed a condition such as mesothelioma it would simply be a question of quantifying the claim.

You will be aware that asbestos exposure for most workers occurred over 25 years ago. Many of the firms which employed them have gone into liquidation. Considerable time has been spent identifying defendants and then carrying out searches and enquiries to locate their insurers. This is especially true in the construction industries where companies can be relatively short lived and periods of employment can be brief.

Can you please let me know if you intend to follow the Scottish Parliament lead and bring forward fresh legislation to reverse the Lords' decision. I further call on you to ensure that any compensation for contracting Pleural Plaques will not be considered full and final should a person later suffer from asbestos related disease.

Please write to me at the address below with your response.

UCATT

Union of Construction Allied Trades and Technicians