

Occupational diseases have created a legacy of poverty and suffering in communities around the world. One of the most dangerous industries that have infected thousands of workers with disease is the asbestos industry. This industry is known for its lack of industry regulations and neglect in implementing appropriate health and safety policies for workers. This negligence has left many individuals suffering from asbestos exposure and searching for ways to receive compensation for their occupational diseases. This study addresses the most commonly pursued option for those suffering with an asbestos-related disease: workers' compensation.

Both the United States and South Africa have struggled with high incidences of asbestos-related diseases among workers, though the use of asbestos for mining and production are very different in the two countries. This study evaluates the workers' compensation systems in each country by determining how well they work using the measures of adequacy, efficiency, transparency and fairness. A thorough investigation of the programs determine the strengths and weaknesses of the United States and South African systems which helps to identify possible areas of reform. This thesis next evaluates the policy environment of each country in order to determine the feasibility of reform. The measures used for determining the feasibility of change in each country are implementation, policy institutions, government-business relations and setting.

The workers' compensation systems in both the United States and South Africa suffer because they are forced to bear the burden of the careless asbestos industry. In the end, both systems have the potential to provide better occupational disease compensation by learning from the strengths and weaknesses of each other in an effort to make effective reforms for the future.