

**ASBESTOS: DEMS ASK BUSH TEAM TO EXPLAIN WHY THEY STOPPED ALERT**

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Greenwire

Eleven congressional members asked the Bush administration on Monday to produce documents supporting the decision not to issue a warning about "extremely lethal asbestos fiber" that ended up in insulation across the country.

The White House stopped the U.S. EPA from issuing a public health emergency warning in April 2002. Under a Freedom of Information Act request filed by the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, the EPA turned over nine boxes of documents that indicated the agency was poised to make an announcement about the deadly asbestos tremolite found in Zonolite insulation. W.R. Grace & Co., Zonolite's manufacturer, shipped at least 15.6 billion pounds of the contaminated ore to "millions of homes, businesses and schools across America," the EPA documents said. But the White House Office of Management and Budget intervened, and the EPA never made the declaration (Greenwire, Jan. 2).

In separate letters to EPA Administrator Christie Whitman and John Graham, a senior official in the Office of Management and Budget, Murray asked for an explanation into why the Bush administration officials intervened to stop the asbestos alert. The letter -- signed by Sens. Patty Murray (D-Wash.), Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.), Maria Cantwell (D-Wash.), Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-N.Y.), Jim Jeffords (I-Vt.), and Mark Dayton (D-Minn.), Reps. Henry Waxman (D-Calif.), Jan **Schakowsky** (D-Ill.), Betty McCollum (D-Minn.), Jerold Nadler (D-N.Y.) and Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio) -- asked the OMB to release its correspondence with Grace.

OMB officials referred questions about the request to the EPA, which said the agency is set to launch a nationwide education campaign about Zonolite's dangers in six weeks (Charles Pope,

Seattle Post-Intelligencer, Feb. 11). -- DIL