The Legacy of Asbestos on Old Texas Oilfields

Where Exposure Happened and How Workers Can Prove It Today

Asbestos was everywhere on Texas oilfields, especially during the mid-20th century. For workers starting their careers in the 1960s, 1970s, or early 1980s, this meant daily exposure without knowing the risks. At the time, asbestos was considered an essential component of oilfield equipment because it resisted heat, fire, and corrosion. Manufacturers used it extensively, even as internal documents showed that they were aware of the health dangers.

The problems created by that era are surfacing now. Asbestos diseases have long latency periods, meaning symptoms often take 20–50 years to appear. This is why so many retirees are being diagnosed today with cancers they never expected. Their exposure happened long ago, and yet the consequences are emerging at a stage in life when medical intervention is more complicated and financial stability is even more critical.

Texas is unique because of its scale. No other state operated oilfields of the same size, volume, and intensity across so many decades. That means the number of workers with valid exposure histories is enormous. For many, the key to proving exposure today is understanding how asbestos was embedded in the machinery, systems, and daily routines of older Texas oilfield jobs.

Experienced lung cancer attorneys know the patterns, equipment, and asbestos-containing products used throughout Texas oilfields, and they can piece together the evidence needed to pursue compensation. For many older workers, this is the first real opportunity to understand what happened and to hold the right parties accountable.

Who Was Most at Risk on Texas Oilfields

Asbestos exposure was widespread in Texas, but certain jobs and locations faced far heavier concentrations. Workers in the Permian Basin, the Eagle Ford Shale, and the Gulf Coast refinery corridor handled equipment and materials that relied on asbestos long after the dangers were known. Those in repair, maintenance, or high-heat roles were exposed most often, usually without being told the risks.

Because these jobs existed across multiple regions and employers, many retirees now facing cancer don’t realize how many sources of exposure they encountered. The roles most consistently linked to asbestos on Texas oilfields include:

- **Roughnecks and Drillers:** Worked directly beside asbestos-insulated rig components in the Permian Basin, East Texas, and South Texas fields.

- **Pump Mechanics and Equipment Techs:** Replaced asbestos gaskets, packing, and seals on mud pumps and compressors throughout Midland–Odessa, the Panhandle, and West Texas.
- **Compressor Station Crews:** Handled asbestos-wrapped valves and turbines in stations from the Permian Basin to the Barnett Shale.
- **Pipeline Workers and Welders:** Cut into asbestos-coated pipe and insulated fittings across gathering systems in East Texas, South Texas, and the Gulf Coast.
- **Refinery Maintenance Crews:** Faced intense exposure during shutdowns and turnarounds in Houston, Beaumont, Port Arthur, and Corpus Christi.
- **Truck Mechanics and Fleet Workers:** Replaced asbestos brake shoes and clutches on rig trucks operating in Midland, Odessa, Karnes County, and Longview.
- **Fabrication Yard and Shop Workers:** Ground or rebuilt asbestos-containing parts in Gulf Coast yards and major hubs like Houston and Odessa.

Even if workers don't remember the exact materials they handled, these roles and regions form strong exposure patterns, which is something an attorney can piece together to determine whether a viable claim exists.

Why Texas Oilfields Used So Much Asbestos

Oil production in Texas involved extreme temperatures, powerful mechanical forces, and constant risk of fire. This created an enormous market for materials that could withstand heat and pressure, and asbestos became the industry's go-to solution. Manufacturers sold asbestos-containing gaskets, insulation, packing, cement, brake linings, and thermal barriers to drilling contractors throughout the state.

Exposure occurred in many ways and often through routine work that seemed harmless at the time. Before listing them, it's important to understand that most workers encountered asbestos repeatedly, not just occasionally. Equipment aged quickly under Texas conditions, which meant frequent repairs. Every time a gasket was removed, insulation was disturbed, or a pump was rebuilt, asbestos fibers could become airborne. Many workers breathed this dust for years without being told it was dangerous.

- **Drilling Rigs** included asbestos insulation on drawworks, rotary tables, brake bands, doghouses, and high-heat components.
- **Mud Pumps and Mud Houses** used asbestos gaskets, packing, cement, and seals that released fibers during routine repairs.
- **Compressors and Turbines** were wrapped in asbestos insulation that deteriorated and exposed maintenance crews.

- **Pipelines and Gathering Systems** relied on asbestos-coated pipe, asbestos cement, and insulated fittings frequently disturbed during repairs.
- **Boilers and Heater Treaters** contained asbestos insulation around high-heat surfaces, exposing crews during maintenance.
- **Brake Systems on Rig Trucks** used asbestos brake shoes and clutch components that released fibers during replacements.
- **Refinery and Petrochemical Units** used asbestos throughout insulation, refractory materials, gaskets, and packing.
- **Fabrication Yards and Equipment Shops** exposed workers to fibers during cutting, grinding, and rebuilding of older components.

These sources form the backbone of exposure histories. When workers recognize these conditions in their past, a lawyer can help determine whether a claim is possible and which companies may be liable.

Why Asbestos Exposure Is Harder to Trace Today

Workers often worry that too much time has passed to prove exposure. However, the age of the exposure is exactly why these cases still exist. Because asbestos diseases take decades to develop, most valid claims today involve workers who retired years ago. That does not prevent a detailed investigation.

The challenge is that documentation from older Texas oilfields is scattered. Many companies merged, dissolved, or reorganized, leaving incomplete records. Workers may recall the job but not the specific brand of gasket or insulation they handled. Some no longer have pay stubs or work logs that could verify their assignments.

Despite these barriers, exposure patterns on Texas oilfields were consistent and well-documented across the industry. Experienced asbestos lung cancer attorneys rely on historical records, equipment catalogs, union logs, and expert testimony to rebuild missing pieces. This is why legal support is essential, because retired workers should not be expected to piece together decades-old exposure on their own.

Many retired workers also wrongly assume that smoking prevents them from filing a claim. It does not. Asbestos exposure dramatically increases lung cancer risk in smokers, and these cases remain eligible for compensation when the exposure history supports it.

How Workers Can Prove Asbestos Exposure Today

Even without complete documentation, there are reliable ways to confirm exposure. Attorneys gather multiple forms of evidence to create a strong and credible exposure record. This process is essential for workers seeking compensation because it identifies who supplied asbestos

products and which companies are legally responsible today. Commonly used sources to reconstruct exposure include:

- **Drilling Reports and Well Files,** which show locations, contractors, and equipment on each job.
- **Equipment Manuals and OEM Records,** revealing which parts originally contained asbestos.
- **Union Logs and Employment Records,** verifying work assignments, job duties, and transfers.
- **Refinery Turnaround Records,** documenting asbestos insulation and gasket use.
- **Purchasing and Inventory Documents,** showing which brands and materials were ordered.
- **Coworker Testimony and Expert Statements,** which strengthen exposure narratives.
- **Asbestos Product Identification Databases,** linking known asbestos products to specific equipment.
- **Corporate Histories and Merger Records,** which identify successor companies responsible for today's claims.

With a combination of these tools, lawyers can trace exposure to specific products and manufacturers, even when decades have passed.

Why Asbestos Exposure Still Matters for Texas Oilfield Workers Over 65

Asbestos exposure on Texas oilfields was common and rarely disclosed, and many retired workers are now facing illnesses tied to conditions they were never warned about. Filing a claim does not affect VA benefits or other government support. Veterans and non-veterans can pursue compensation without risking the care they already receive. Smokers can file too, because asbestos is an independent cause of lung cancer and mesothelioma.

These cases do not involve suing your former employer. The claims target the manufacturers that made and sold asbestos products to Texas oilfields. Our lawyers investigate the drilling rigs, compressors, pumps, pipelines, and shop work where exposure happened and build the evidence needed to hold the right companies accountable.

The Ferrell Law Group has spent more than 35 years proving these cases for oilfield workers over 65. Our case results include a $5 million recovery for an oilfield worker with mesothelioma, $4.7 million for a woman exposed through take-home fibers, and $2.8 million for a veteran.

We assemble medical experts, industrial hygienists, and historians to connect your diagnosis to your past worksites and identify every available source of compensation. If you have been

diagnosed with mesothelioma or lung cancer, contact us for a free consultation. You focus on your health. We handle the rest.