Background: The Surveillance of Australian workplace Based Respiratory Events (SABRE) New South Wales (NSW) scheme is a voluntary notification scheme established to determine the incidence of occupational lung diseases in NSW Australia.

Aims: Data presented in this paper summarize the last 7 years of reporting to SABRE (June 2001 to December 2008).

Methods: Every 2 months, participating occupational physicians, respiratory physicians and general practitioners (accredited by the NSW WorkCover Authority) reported new cases of occupational lung disease seen in their practices. Data collected include gender, age, causal agent and the occupations and industries believed responsible. Estimated incidence was calculated for each disease.

Results: Three thousand six hundred and fifty-four cases were notified to the scheme, consisting of 3,856 diagnoses. Most of the cases were males (76%). Pleural plaques [1,218 (28%)] were the most frequently reported condition, followed by mesothelioma [919 (24%)] and diffuse pleural thickening [839 (22%)]. The authors estimated rates for mesothelioma and diffuse pleural thickening (DPT) at 83 and 83 cases per million employed males per year, respectively.

Trades such as carpenters and electricians associated with the building industry, electricity supply and asbestos product manufacture were the most common occupations and industries reported.

Conclusions: Asbestos-related diseases are the most frequently reported conditions to SABRE NSW. The very low incidence of OA for NSW most likely reflects under-diagnosis as well as under-reporting. Occupational lung disease is still occurring in NSW despite current preventative strategies. The SABRE scheme currently provides the only available information in this area.
Fact 1
Voluntary surveillance of Australian workplace based respiratory events scheme operated by the State of New South Wales has been established to determine the incidence of work-related respiratory disease and to disseminate information about the burden of occupational respiratory disease.

Fact 2
Among all respiratory conditions reported to this surveillance scheme during the 7.5-year period, asbestos-related disorders accounted for a large proportion (3,584 cases, 93%) of disease notified.

Fact 3
Pleural plaques were the most frequently reported condition (1,218 cases, 32%), followed by mesothelioma (919 cases, 24%), diffuse pleural thickening (839 cases, 22%) and asbestosis (366 cases, 10%).

Fact 4
The most frequently reported occupations with asbestos exposure were carpenters, maintenance fitters and turners, electricians, plumbers, pipe laggers, waterside workers and construction workers associated with the building industry, asbestos product manufacture, electricity supply and shipbuilding.

Fact 5

References