

Oscar's fight continues. First help desk on asbestos in Samarate

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In Samarate, Oscar Misin fought his own battle against asbestos for years. A maintenance worker at the power station in Turbigo, Misin had organised meetings, urged politicians and, after two years passed from his death, in Samarate the first help desk in the Province will be started, providing information about asbestos, its removal, health risks, and the social security assistance for exposed workers. This is the outcome of the commitment of Oscar's family, of his daughter, his wife and his friends, and of the Associazione Italiana Esposti Amianto (Italian association for people exposed to asbestos, Ed.). "Samarate will be the first municipality in the Province with such a help desk," explains Chiara Misin, Oscar's daughter. "This is an activity that's already been started in other areas, such as in the two municipalities of Buscate and Magnago." The area north of Milan pays particular attention to this, because here one of the largest workplaces full of asbestos can be found: the thermal power station in Turbigo, where this dangerous material was (in fact, it is still) everywhere, and where workers are working without precautions.

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Many ex-workers of the power station in Turbigo have been some of the first activists of the Associazione Italiana Esposti Amianto, and thanks to their commitment they managed to set for a trial on the management of this large plant (which is private now, though having belonged to Enel for decades). Today, thanks to AIEA, the help desk is being set up in Samarate as well. "People will have the possibility to access at certain times, AIEA volunteers will give information on everything concerning asbestos, from any point of view – from generic information, to the current regulations for disposal, and to the assistance in the field of social security," adds Chiara Misin. The exposed workers are many, including people who used to install or handle roofs made of asbestos, maintenance workers who used to deal with plant that used asbestos as an insulator, and their families.

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However, the issue has become broader now. "Through this help desk, we hope to sensitise citizens. Asbestos is now a problem concerning all of us, not just of people who worked with it, but of the whole population. There are 30 million tons of building and non-building asbestos in Italy. This material is all dangerous, as the conservation condition is getting worse and worse." Asbestos cannot be produced and handled since 1992 (according to law n. 257/92), but this means that all of this material in cities and villages, from roofs and canopies exposed to air and other weather conditions,

has been installed for at least 22 years. In this sense, the help desk aims at promoting even the census of asbestos: "Self-denouncing is compulsory today, we'd like to provide people with an instrument to carry out even the denouncing of the existing material, reminding them that lacking to denounce is sanctioned, but not late self-denounce."

Hence: to make the presence of asbestos come to light is always advisable, even for legal reasons, if not for health reasons.

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The project of the Sportello Amianto (asbestos help desk, Ed.) by AIEA will be preceded by a convention on Friday evening, 11 April, organised even thanks to the town council in Samarate, "who proved to be very sensitive." The evening will be started by Mayor Leonardo Tarantino and by the assessor for town planning Marco Bonacina, and then Tiziano Volpato, Emilio Pampaluna and Chiara Misin (AIEA Turbigo), Pierangelo Trognacara (Samarate town council), Guglielmo Gaviani (Prevention technician) and Valentino Gritta (responsible for AIEA in northern Italy). At the core of the evening, there will be information on risks linked to asbestos and cleaning operations, including the removal and the disposal of the most notorious and widespread product, the Eternit corrugated sheets.

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