



THE IRONWORKER

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International Association of Bridge,
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Atlantic City's New Boardwalk

Legalized gambling spurs a boom in construction along the most highly-prized stop along the Monopoly board, Boardwalk

Marshall Refutes GAO's Davis-Bacon Study

U.S. Secretary of Labor Ray Marshall attacks a faulty study of the Davis-Bacon Act done earlier by the U.S. Government Accounting Office

Georgia World Congress Center Completed

Atlanta's new convention center and the Omni Coliseum are expected to draw big crowds to the state once governed by Jimmy Carter

A New Way to Fight Inflation

The National Safety Council proposes to President Carter a safe and healthy method of cutting inflation by 15 percent

Organized Labor Takes to the Offensive

Midwinter meetings of the AFL-CIO Executive Council end with a bold new political agenda on domestic and international issues

Your Job and Your Health

A new feature including recent information on lead poisoning, asbestos exposure and micronutrients

Tariffs Reinstated for Offshore Platforms

Ironworkers won the war to impose duties on rigs from Malaysia, but Brown & Root wins the battle with the third in a series of strange loopholes

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THE IRONWORKER



ON OUR COVERS—This month's front cover shows the Georgia World Congress Center, one of the largest single rooms in the world, giving Atlanta a post position in conventions. Our back cover shows the construction of the Atlantic City's new casino, an artist's conception of the ground's new construction.

PLAINTIFF'S EXHIBIT

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Your Job and Your Health

by Anthony Robbins, MD

Dr. Robbins is Director of the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH). The Institute which is part of the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare was established by the OSH Act of 1970 to perform research on causes of workplace illness and accidents and to develop recommended standards and other methods of control.

Q.—For several years I have worked on commercial construction jobs. Often I work in the same room with welders, painters, and electricians. Some of us have become sick with upset stomach, trembling, lost weight, and have been weak and tired lately. At first we thought it was the flu, but a welder said it is lead poisoning. Is this serious? He said that several years ago, before he started wearing a respirator, a doctor gave him some pills to take every day. After that they couldn't measure the lead in his blood anymore. Why don't they give us these pills?

A.—The symptoms you describe can indeed be the result of lead poisoning, but it is hard to be sure without the results of medical tests. If you have been overexposed to lead—you should see your doctor and advise your supervisor of the problem. The health effects of lead overexposure can be serious.

Lead can be swallowed or inhaled, and, as may have happened in your case, you need not be working directly with lead to be overexposed if the substance is used nearby. We have also found that people using lead at work can carry enough lead home on their clothes and body to poison their children.

After the lead gets into the body, it is carried in the blood to various sites where some is stored and some excreted, the stored part adding to the normal amounts of lead we get from food, air, and water. When the body cannot eliminate the lead as quickly as it takes lead in, the person may suffer lead poisoning with typical signs as described in your letter or more severe signs such as "wrist drop," caused by damaged nerves controlling certain muscles. Recovery in these cases may be slow and not always complete.

In more serious cases, kidneys are damaged, red blood cell production impaired, and coma and death may follow. Some of the most serious problems are faced by workers with certain health disorders or by women of childbearing age, whose unborn children may be adversely affected by lead. Numerous studies show lead in the mother's body

can enter the fetus and damage the child or cause a miscarriage. Even men with higher than normal levels of lead in their blood may have lower fertility rates.

There is a way to help the body eliminate lead, by taking chelating drugs as your welder friend did, but the treatment can be dangerous if used repeatedly or to prevent lead poisoning. Not only may the lead, but the drug itself, damage the kidneys. And the drug may not protect against the nerve damage linked with lead poisoning.

Chelating drugs should be used only to treat diagnosed cases of lead poisoning and then only under a doctor's direct supervision. They should not be used to prevent lead poisoning—the way to do this is by reducing exposure. NIOSH has made the following specific recommendations to prevent lead intoxication—of which every worker potentially exposed to lead should be aware:

1. Make sure your employer takes measurements of the amount of lead in the air in your workplace and that the level does not exceed the OSHA standard.

2. Use adequate engineering containment or ventilation—not respirators—to prevent breathing lead fumes during normal workday operations.

3. Wear coveralls or other full body protective clothing, change the clothing at least daily, and do not take the clothes home for laundering. Your employer should provide for laundering of workclothes and should provide showers for employee use.

4. Don't eat, drink, or smoke in areas where there may be lead, and wash hands before eating, smoking, or drinking.

5. Keep the workplace as clean as possible.

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This column is the result of many inquiries received by NIOSH and is intended to help directly communicate the results of the Institute's research and investigations to other concerned workers. The Institute continues to welcome inquiries from individuals or organizations concerning health and safety hazards at work. Each month NIOSH will screen the letters and select one or more with the most importance and general interest to answer in this column. The others, as in the past, will be answered directly by NIOSH health and safety experts.

Letters may be addressed to: Q & A, NIOSH Room 8-20, Parklawn Building, 5600 Fishers Lane, Rockville, Maryland 20857



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Do You Work with Asbestos?

by Eula Bingham,
Assistant Secretary of Labor,
for Occupational Safety and Health

Do you work with asbestos? It's worth finding out, because asbestos is one of the most serious threats to the health of American workers.

Asbestos can be found at construction sites, shipyards, textile and chemical plants, auto repair shops, schools, paper mills, and many other workplaces. It can travel from one part of a work area to another through ventilation systems. It can be inhaled or swallowed with food.

In all, three to five million workers may be exposed to asbestos. Studies have shown that more than 40 percent of asbestos workers will die of asbestos-related diseases. Even very brief exposure may cause a deadly lung disease or cancer which may not show up for 20 years or more. Other studies have shown that 38 percent of asbestos workers' family members may suffer lung disorders, apparently as a result of exposure to fibers which are brought home on work clothes.

There is no known safe level for exposure to asbestos, so it is important that your employer reduce your exposure as much as possible. The standard issued by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) requires your employer to limit average exposure over an 8-hour shift to two asbestos fibers longer than five micrometers in each cubic centimeter of air.

To meet this standard, employers must use engineering controls. These may include isolation and enclosure of work processes, exhaust ventilation systems, and dust collection. All hand-operated and power-operated tools which might release asbestos must be equipped with local ex-



haust systems. As far as possible, asbestos must be kept wet when being handled.

Employers must provide approved respirators while changes are being made to reduce exposure, or if otherwise necessary. Workers who can't function normally when wearing a respirator may not be assigned to tasks which require respirator use. Employers must also provide change rooms, two separate clothes lockers, and laundry service so that asbestos fibers will not be transferred to street clothes.

At workplaces where asbestos is present, employers must conduct tests at least every six months to determine asbestos exposure levels. They also must provide regular medical examinations. Workers have the right to see their exposure records, and to have their medical records made available to their doctors.

If you have questions about asbestos and the OSHA asbestos standard, contact the nearest OSHA office. Look in your phone book under "United States Government, Department of Labor, Occupational Safety and Health Administration," or write to OSHA, 3rd and Constitution Avenue N.W., Washington, D.C. 20210.

Nature's "Cooking" Is Hard To Copy

The eminent Chairman of the USDA's Nutrition Institute favors diets which serve up a healthy helping of foods as "nature" prepares them.

Dr. Walter Mertz says that essential nutrients we discover tomorrow might be missing from our food today. He notes, for example, that only since 1970 have some of the "new trace elements" been shown to have essential functions in animals. Their possible role in human health is still being explored, and recommended dietary allowances have yet to be established.

That's just a tiny taste of what we have to learn. You'd never know it by our modern eating habits.

This century has seen a drop in consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables and whole grain products. These provide food fiber, vitamins and essential trace elements.

We've seen a great increase in intake of refined and "partitioned" foods. Highly refined foods, Mertz explains, "... carry few micronutrients (ingredients needed in small amounts: trace elements and vitamins). The content of fiber is reduced. And the probability of unknown food factors being refined-out is considerable."

This places "an undue demand" for essential micronutrients on the part of the diet which is not refined. Eating too much of "synthetic" foods can add to that burden.

Synthetic foods, says Mertz, are not intended to copy nature. "Soft drinks are perhaps the best, though not the only, example."

Nature hasn't told us all her secrets yet!—Marion Wells

American Physical Fitness
Institute