

NIOSH is undergoing evolutionary, not revolutionary, changes, Finklea said. The NIOSH system of priorities will be altered.

NIOSH has provided consultative services to small businesses which have been well-received, Finklea said. It is wise to separate the roles of policeman and teacher, and NIOSH is well-placed to serve as teacher.

NIOSH is going to try to focus its efforts on the most important problems. More attention must be directed to safety problems and the effects of workplace substances on women of child-bearing age. NIOSH must work more closely with researchers of other federal agencies to avoid unnecessary duplication of effort.

The credibility of federal programs is being seriously questioned, Finklea said, a problem which can be helped with more openness. Most technical and medical expertise resides in government and industry, not with workers. Yet the creation of a "technical priesthood" must be avoided, if the affected employees are not to be shut out of the regulatory process. Too often employees have not been involved in the development of standards, he said.

A better way to provide for training of safety and health professionals must be developed, Finklea said. There are many ways to pay for the training, either through direct federal grants or exerting pressure on medical schools to change curricula.

The adversary system of developing regulations must be scrutinized closely to be made more effective without reducing input, Finklea said.

Standards Setting

Daniel Boyd, director of the OSHA Office of Standards Development, addressed the NAM in what he said was his last speech prior to his departure from OSHA scheduled for December 1. Boyd said he intends to make several recommendations for regulatory reform before he leaves.

It is very difficult for the government to make purely scientific decisions on controversial health issues, Boyd said. Such decisions should be based on facts, not on consensus of opinion, especially since human lives are at stake. Even so it is possible to reach a concept of acceptable risk, he said.

During the public hearings on the vinyl chloride standard, Boyd said he became convinced that neither industry nor labor actually wanted the positions they put forth in public. "I have never had to compromise any decision because of politics," Boyd said. Politics has not actually played a big part in the OSHA standards-setting process.

The development of vertical standards (for each industry would not work, Boyd said. OSHA has neither the competence or resources for such a mammoth task.

In the past few years, OSHA standards have been reactive and symptomatic, Boyd said. Hopefully in the future OSHA will not be surprised by problems like vinyl chloride.

From now on all proposed health standards must be accompanied by inflation impact statements, Boyd said. It will be many months before another health standard is proposed.

Health Hazards

NIOSH ISSUES BACKGROUND REPORT ON USE OF POLYCHLORINATED BIPHENYLS

A report on the industrial uses and toxicity of polychlorinated biphenyls was issued by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health on November 3. The background material was prepared by the NIOSH Office of Occupational Health Surveillance and Biometrics to

inform the occupational health community of current knowledge concerning industrial uses and toxicity of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and solicit comments and suggestions.

NIOSH estimated that 12,000 people are occupationally exposed to PCBs, with the majority of these exposures in capacitor production and in investment casting processes. NIOSH noted that PCBs are employed in capacitors and transformers because they combine attractive dielectric properties with chemical stability and fire resistance. Approximately twice as many pounds of PCBs are used in the manufacture of capacitors as in the manufacture of transformers.

The known toxic effects of PCBs in humans include an acne-like skin eruption (chloracne), pigmentation of the skin and nails, excessive eye discharge, swelling of eyelids, and distinctive hair follicles.

For a number of years, chloracne of the face and neck has been reported among workers exposed to chlorinated hydrocarbons. Workers exposed to PCBs in the process of insulating cables, in the production of condensers, and in the manufacture of chlorobiphenyls have reported these skin lesions along with systemic effects such as digestive disturbances, edema of the face and hands, burning of the eyes, impotence, and hematuria.

NIOSH also noted the 1968 outbreak of poisoning in Japan that involved over 1,000 people who ingested PCB contaminated rice bran oil for a period of several months. Details on the malignant, nonmalignant, and reproductive effects of PCBs in animals also were reported.

The current Occupational Safety and Health Administration standards for chlorinated biphenyls are 1 mg/cubic meter for 42 percent chlorine mixtures and .5 mg/cubic meter for 54 percent chlorine mixtures (Reference File 31-8302). These are based on the Threshold Limit Values (TLV) established by the American Conference of Governmental Industrial Hygienists.

General Policy

NIOSH TO COMPLETE HAZARDS SURVEY IN OCTOBER 1976; DATA NOW BEING USED

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health expects to complete its National Occupational Hazards Survey by October 1976 but is drawing on data from the survey for other purposes, according to John Finklea, NIOSH director.

More research is needed regarding the trade names of chemicals before the survey is finished, Finklea told OSHR. This research involves identifying the chemical components of trade name products while maintaining the confidentiality of trade names.

In the meantime, data from the survey has been helpful to NIOSH in issuing information bulletins, and in preparing testimony on the proposed Occupational Safety and Health Administration noise standard (Current Report, July 3, p. 158).

NIOSH and OSHA are working together closely in the preparation of criteria documents, and the Standards Completion Project Finklea said. NIOSH hopes to shorten the period for reviewing a criteria document from one year to 30 weeks. NIOSH would like to involve the Labor Department early in the review process, and get an in-depth review of documents by experts outside the Federal Government.

Finklea noted that the threshold limit values for 50-100 substances adopted by the Labor Department from a 1968