

EXECUTIVE OVERVIEW

The guidelines provide the basic information needed by the Operating Telephone Companies to develop, introduce and maintain a comprehensive program for protecting employees from occupational exposure to airborne asbestos fibers.

The hazards of asbestos are well documented and universally recognized. Asbestos has been long known to cause asbestosis, and is also known to be implicated in the production of a variety of lung cancer. In recognition of the serious health hazards associated with this substance, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has imposed strict regulations designed to protect employees from exposure to asbestos in their workplaces and work environments. Issued as Section 29 CFR 1910.1001 of the Code of Federal Regulations, the standard establishes permissible exposure limits for airborne asbestos fibers. It also specifies the methods, work practices, monitoring and recordkeeping procedures, and medical surveillance programs which employers must establish to protect employees from excessive exposure to this substance.

The OSHA Standard for Asbestos requires each employer to cause every place of employment where asbestos fibers are released to be monitored in such a way as to determine whether any employee's exposure to asbestos fibers is above permissible exposure limits established by the Standard. If these limits are exceeded, the employer must immediately undertake a compliance program to protect employees from exposure.

In this connection, each Operating Telephone Company must undertake a program of visual inspection and personal and environmental monitoring to determine whether its workplaces are in compliance with the provisions of this Standard. This program must include Company-provided workplaces in Company-owned or leased buildings. It may also include specific telephone company work operations in customer-provided workplaces where asbestos has been used for general fireproofing and heat insulation.

In all situations where personal and environmental monitoring results indicate that employee exposures exceed the limits established by the Standard, the Operating Telephone Company must immediately initiate a compliance program to protect employees from these exposures.

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Each Operating Telephone Company should identify the department and organization which is responsible for the development and implementation of company policy with respect to asbestos. In most Companies, this responsibility has already been assigned to the Personnel Department where it is currently shared by the Medical and Safety organizations.

- (1) The Company Safety Coordinator is normally the primary contact for information concerning standards, sampling and analytical procedures, and maintaining results. Interpretation of results should be a joint function of the Safety and Medical organizations in consultation with the Bell Laboratories Environmental Safety and Health Department.
- (2) The Company Medical Director provides technical support and directs the development and implementation of the medical surveillance program for asbestos.
- (3) In some Companies, these activities may be coordinated and directed by an Occupational Health Working Group (OHWG) as recommended in General Letter (GL 75-02-130) dated February 19, 1975.

These guidelines are intended to assist Company Medical Directors, Safety Coordinators, and others responsible for employee safety and health in developing the policies and programs needed to comply with specific requirements of the "Asbestos" Standard. They provide:

- . Basic procedures for assessing the safety of the work environment.
- . Specific engineering controls and administrative procedures for controlling asbestos when found in employees' workplaces.
- . Details concerning the personal protective equipment (respirators and clothing) which must be provided to employees exposed to potentially harmful concentrations of airborne asbestos fibers.
- . Information needed to develop training programs for familiarizing employees with the hazards of asbestos and with procedures that have been initiated to protect them from harmful exposure.

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- . Details concerning the medical surveillance programs and recordkeeping procedures that must be implemented for employees who have been exposed to potentially hazardous levels of asbestos fibers.