

copy of original Mission Statement

THE OHWG

The Bell System Occupational Health Working Group (OHWG) was formed in July of 1973. Its broad goals are to:

1. Increase the awareness of known and potential health hazards in the Bell System and bring about a safer and more healthful work environment for its employees.
2. Contribute such information to the Government, or its standard advisory committees, so that standards promulgated represent the best scientific and medical evidence available, marshalled into practical and usable standards.
3. Make recommendations to appropriate system departments regarding conclusions on proposed standards and other health issues that come to the committee's attention.

The following Departments have been involved in this working group: AT&T Medical, Engineering, and Customer Facilities; Bell Telephone Labs - Environmental Safety and Health Dept.; WECO Medical and three Operating Company Medical Departments (Long Lines, ~~Pennsylvania~~ and New Jersey).

Thus far, the OHWG has written to OSHA on Carbon Monoxide, Noise, and Trichloroethylene. We are in the process of commenting again on noise and preparing comments on inorganic lead and heat stress.

As a result of a shift in policy in the OSHA Administration, present and future OSHA activities have shifted from safety to health standards. We can expect significantly large number of health standards as a result of this shift in policy.

In order for us to be prepared to handle these health standards, we need to gather more specific information in field surveys and research in the following areas:

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Existing Standards

- Noise (This Standard is being revised and will be much more stringent by the end of 1974.)
- Vinyl Chloride (Operating Companies will be involved in determining how much VC comes off (in vapors) PVC fabricated products.
- Asbestos
- Carcinogens

Standards that NIOSH has proposed to OSHA and have a good chance of promulgation in 1974 and 1975:

- Carbon Monoxide
- Heat Stress
- Inorganic Lead

The Standards are listed in rough order of priority. A review of their impact on System Operations is outlined in the attachment.

When this survey information is available, it will be used to:

- Write testimony on proposed health standards that can help shape them into practical and scientifically sound standards.
- Determine compliance (In some cases like lead, you must survey to prove you are in compliance).
Set up to meet appropriate Medical provisions.
- Write BSP's to implement health standards uniformly in the field.
- Respond to health citations.
- Avoid duplication or unnecessary Operating Company testing, monitoring and equipment purchase.

R.W. Stone, M.D.
1974 Bell System Medical Conference
Moran, Wyoming

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Attachment

ATTACHMENT

THE BELL SYSTEM AND OSHA HEALTH STANDARDS

When the Act known as OSHA 70 was passed, many people predicted that the long-term and most significant aspects of the Act would be in the area of health standards. The prediction is not only true, but it is beginning to take on new meaning for the Bell System.

Many Bell System people felt that OSHA would not affect us for a number of years because "we were ahead of the rest of industry in safety and health matters." While we may be ahead of the rest of the industry (injury and illness rates indicated this is true), OSHA is beginning to affect us with some regularity.

Two permanent health standards in effect now are concerned with asbestos and carcinogens. We know that asbestos has been used in these situations in Bell System Companies:

1. As an insulation and fire repellent on some exposed metal beams in buildings.
2. As a covering for cable slots between floors and walls of central offices.
3. As a covering or insulation for some pipes in buildings.
4. As a backboard in central office power rooms.
5. As transite duct in conduit runs.

Provisions of the asbestos standard require annual medical exams for employees exposed to any concentration of airborne asbestos fibers. It also limits the number of fibers that an employee can be exposed to in work environment.

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To meet this standard, we are making tests in Bell System work environment where asbestos is used and evaluating if alternative materials are available, or if exposure can be eliminated.

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The two examples of permanent standards (asbestos and carcinogens), one example of an emergency standard (Vinyl-chloride) and four examples of proposed standards (noise, carbon monoxide, heat stress and inorganic lead) reveal a number of important aspects in working with OSHA Health Standards.

AUGUST 1974

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