

CURRENT REPORT

tube scaffolding together would take a week and the workers would be "hanging on scaffolding trying to assemble it, put it together, then they've got to take it down. So that would be more hazardous." Whereas, he explained, with a suspended work platform, the workers are inside guardrails and have safety belts on.

During questioning on AGC's negative attitude towards the use of anti-two blocking devices, Hodges said, "I don't recall any failure of the devices per se," adding that "operator error is going to be your biggest problem."

On the use of boom angle indicators on cranes, Hodges told Jones, "They're not always that accurate." He said that they are usually "off up to five or ten degrees." In response to Jones' question on how an operator would ensure that the angle indicator was correct, Hodges noted that if a crane, which is usually rented or leased, is going to be on a job for more than a week, the crane inspector will check it out.

H. Steve Jones, the official who heads up OSHA's work on the proposal, noted that Hodges had claimed there should be trial runs of the personnel platforms only at the beginning of the shift. Jones asked if the association thinks a new trial lift should be required when a crane is moved to a new location in mid-shift. Hodges responded, "Possibly could, depending on how far you moved it." He added, "You'd get a backache throwing a hundred pounds of sandbags or whatever you can find into the skip box, or the platform" in order to do the trial run and this process would have to be repeated over and over again under OSHA's current proposal. In response to Jones' question on whether the lifting of the weights into the platform to simulate the trial run is the biggest objection, Hodges said it was.

Asbestos

AIA RESPONSE TO ASBESTOS RULEMAKING STILL BEING DEVELOPED, MEETING TOLD

The Asbestos Information Association's response to Occupational Safety and Health Administration rulemaking on asbestos "is still being considered and developed," B.J. Pigg, executive director of AIA, stated Sept. 19 at the organization's Ninth Industry-Government Conference.

The association is strongly opposed to the banning of asbestos products as proposed by the Office of Management and Budget. The proposal currently is being considered by that agency, according to Pigg. If such a banning proposal were approved, "it would mean the demise of the asbestos industry in the U.S.," he said.

Wilfred Penney, director general of the Asbestos Information Centre, United Kingdom, remarked that "the world waits with a great deal of nervousness to see how we will deal with asbestos and worker exposure." While a real awareness of the hazards of asbestos arose in the 1960s, industry was reluctant at that time to accept some of the evidence due to the widely varying effects of different forms of asbestos, he asserted. Many independent medical and scientific research people have advised the asbestos industry that there is "an overreaction" and that the industry should not shut down, Penney said. He urged control as a viable option with a close-down as an alternative where control is impractical.

The prohibition of a substance or process is not to be taken lightly, he warned. "A decision by the U.S. will have an enormous impact around the world and this must be kept in mind."

In discussing whether there is a safe level of exposure to asbestos, Penney stated that although there is no known

threshold level for asbestos, there is an exposure level below which no statistical significance is shown. "This has always been a *bete noir* for me because if I'm a guy working in an office, then of course there is no statistical significance, if I'm a guy who has got it [asbestos-related disease], then it has great statistical significance for me," he commented.

Manufacturers' Responsibility Extended

Further, Penney stressed that the responsibility of manufacturers now goes beyond what goes on within the plant, extending to how asbestos is used, removed from buildings, and disposed of. "Unless management looks beyond the immediate to these other responsibilities, it will be dead because it is not looking at the whole problem," he cautioned.

"Substitutes for asbestos are not usually as good as the asbestos original," Penney said. In addition, without adequate testing, the substitutes could turn out to be a "mine field," presenting the same problems, or perhaps worse problems, as asbestos, he said.

Asbestos can make beneficial contributions to society. Gary Nash, director general of the minerals and metals strategy branch, Government of Canada, stated. Nash summarized the American view as holding that all asbestos fibers are equally hazardous while the Canadian view is that certain fibers are more hazardous or less hazardous than others. In addition, risk also depends on the particular usage of the fibers, he maintained.

Although admitting that no safe level of exposure to asbestos has been proven, Nash said that where high levels of asbestos exist in the general environment, there have been no observably greater rates of lung cancer or mesothelioma. For this reason, he stated that he would question the "no safe level" assumption concerning asbestos.

Jacques Dunnigan, director general of the Institute for Research and Development on Asbestos, University of Sherbrooke, Quebec, noted that "regulatory responses often lag behind the development of scientific knowledge with workers in the role of guinea pigs." "We must look at what science tells us now, not wait 20 or 30 years," he said. Workers cannot be made to suffer, but substances must be adequately tested, Dunnigan urged.

In addition, many substitutes are cytotoxic to the pulmonary microphage, he said. Nevertheless, regulatory agencies seem to rely on existing substitutes in advising the gradual halt of asbestos production. Dunnigan stated. He urged that all mineralogical fibers should be closely examined and analyzed. Adverse human health effects can be observed arising from these substitutes, Dunnigan noted, stressing that stringent requirements for biological testing must be mandated by the Environmental Protection Agency.

Further, Dunnigan criticized the strategy of banning products since this approach leads people to believe that whatever is not banned must be safe. "Banning one substance therefore can be more dangerous than learning to control the substance," he said. "Asbestos need not be banned — what should be banned is the misuse of these substances."

Oil and Gas

WORKERS WOULD BE ABLE TO HEAR WARNINGS WHILE WEARING PROTECTORS, GROUP TESTIFIES

Employees on oil and gas well drilling and servicing rigs will still be able to hear warning sounds, as well as other ambient noises, while wearing hearing protectors, Steven C