



NATIONAL SAFETY COUNCIL OSHA UP TO DATE

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8,800 Asbestos Deaths in 1984, Researchers Predict

About 8,800 people will die of asbestos-related cancer in 1984, with the figure rising to 10,000 a year by the turn of the century, according to researchers at the Mt. Sinai School of Medicine's Environmental Sciences Laboratory. Dr. William Nicholson told a Senate subcommittee that an analysis of exposure to disease and mortality in 11 major occupational categories having a high potential for exposure to asbestos showed that about 27,500,000 workers have probably had some exposure to asbestos during the years 1940 to 1980, and that these exposures will lead to about 350,000 asbestos-related deaths. We have only experienced a third of the expected deaths so far, Nicholson said. Because of the World War II shipbuilding effort, the highest death rate is among former and current shipyard workers. In the future, there will be an increase in the number of deaths among construction workers because of the spraying of fire-proofing materials containing asbestos that were used on steel work of high-rise buildings from 1958 to 1972.

National Safety Council Makes Recommendations on Asbestos

The National Safety Council has recommended, among other things, that OSHA's permanent PEL for asbestos exposure in both general and the construction industry should be the lowest feasible level detectable using available analytical techniques. OSHA should not promulgate different PELs for different fiber types since there is not sufficient research to warrant variable exposure limits, the Council says.

The Council also recommends that OSHA and NIOSH make determined efforts that laboratories which are approved for testing for compliance with the applicable PEL should assure maximum feasible accuracy in their testing methods and results.

Any regulated area should be restricted to authorized persons who are qualified and trained, the Council says. Appropriate signs, enclosures, barricades and so forth should be required, and protective clothing should be required in all regulated areas, with appropriate change facilities provided for each job, the Council says.

The Council regards respirators as a second line of defense and as not acceptable in lieu of engineering controls and adequate work practices, which should be the primary tools to protect workers against asbestos exposure. When engineering controls and good work practices are found to be ineffective in controlling excess asbestos exposures, and when respirators are required as a method of control, they should be only supplied air respirators (where necessary and feasible on construction jobs) or powered air purifying respirators with highly efficient filters.

The Council recommends a separate asbestos standard should be promulgated for the construction industry.

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Asbestos Manufacturers, Insurers Reach Claims Agreement

Negotiators for asbestos manufacturers and insurance companies have reached an agreement to establish a claims resolution facility that will settle and administer claims filed against all members.

The agreement reached by the negotiators, called the Wellington group after moderator Harry Wellington, dean of the Yale Law School, will end more than 30 major coverage cases relating to insurers' liability now in the courts. One spokesman for the group explained that the manufacturers will receive comprehensive coverage, while insurers will rid themselves of the excessive cost of defending the cases, in addition to litigation and punitive damage claims.

For their part, health claimants will receive the benefit of having their claims adjusted without a long wait. The claimants will not lose their right to retain legal counsel and take their grievances to the courts.

The negotiators are presently planning to set up one claims facility on the East Coast and one on the West. They are also seeking an executive to head the operation. Such an executive must have credibility with the courts, Congress, the public, and attorneys, a spokesman said. The start-up costs of the facility, which will be governed by a 12-person board, will be paid by insurers. Each manufacturer will be allocated liability payments and expenses according to an agreed-upon schedule.

Claimants must submit data so the claim can be evaluated. If the claim is determined to be valid, the facility will attempt to negotiate a settlement.

BLS Seeks Funds For Quality Assurance Programs

The fiscal 1986 budget request for the Bureau of Labor Statistics will include funds for a quality assurance program to check on the accuracy of data reported by employers. Pending approval by the Labor Department and OMB, the bureau will establish an advisory group to determine how such a program should be conducted. A similar request in the FY 1985 budget was not approved.

A BLS official said the request stems from a few factors. For one, the bureau is addressing the quality assurance issue in other areas. For another, the official said, no review has been conducted since major reforms in reporting occupational safety and health records were implemented in 1978, and there is concern about the accuracy of workplace illness data.

The program, expected to be conducted over two years, will involve thousands of worksite visits for record examinations. The OSHA 200 log, and the supplementary record of injuries and illnesses, which may be the OSHA 101 form or an acceptable substitute, will probably be examined.

BLS will also gather original data and check the accuracy of the forms used by employers. A BLS official said labor unions have evidence that employers are deficient in recordkeeping. Records outside the workplace, such as hospital and other medical records, may be a source for cross-checking employers' records. The official noted that the study is intended to be a statistical investigation, not a study on the health of the American worker.

Risk Determination Procedures Described By Shell

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Speaking at the annual American Industrial Hygiene Conference in Detroit, Paul Deisler of Shell Oil Co. described a new procedure for establishing adequate occu-