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TABLE OF CONTENTS



The President's Letter	3
Your Executive Director's Report	11
New Construction Must Prove Itself Labor Group to Industry	15
Mail Box	18
NICA in Your Future — A Dozen Good Reasons to Join	21
Safety Inspection Program Shifts to Target Standards	22
Asbestos Information Group Cites British Doctor's Denial of Changes	24
Asbestos in Lungs Now Detectable	25
Armstrong's Traveling Installation School Teaches Mechanics How To Install Insulation	31
You Don't Have To Go It Alone	32
Childers Acquires Styro-Fabricators	45
Meet the Speakers	46
What's Doing in San Diego	55
NICA Announces . . . Management Training Program	56
October 10—12, 1956 October 14—17, 1973	57
Ward Stress Future Growth of Construction Industry to UA Members	61
Ken Dixon Joins Pamrod	61
What's New From Manufacturers	62
Romet Appoints	65
From Phase Four to Phase Out	65
Good Eating	66

VOL. 18 OCTOBER 1973 NO. 10

Safety inspection program shifts to target standards

The long-standing "target industry" approach to inspecting industry for compliance with safety and health standards—third on OSHA's priority list after investigation of catastrophes and response to complaints—from now on will be deemphasized in favor of "target standards." Instead of concentrating on longshoring, roofing and sheet metal, meat products, transportation equipment, and lumber and wood product industries, investigators will soon begin looking at how well all industries are correcting the most frequently violated standards—such as shoring and barricading trenches and excavations, and violations of the National Electrical Code.

"We're going to start looking across-the-board at the most violated standards and give those extra emphasis," says William F. Dwyer, special assistant for OSHA public affairs. "But we'll try to stress the voluntary aspect of this. We can't have inspectors every place."

The new system should be an improvement over the previous one, "because we'll be able to zero in on those standards which are being violated," Dwyer said. "We're still proceeding on a 'worst first' basis, but now we are going to look at spots where there are the heaviest concentrations of hazards." He added, however, that the target industry approach would not be abandoned completely.

One reason for the reversal of inspection procedure was given by Cham Robbins, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Labor, who pointed out that 95% of all citations issued by OSHA to date have involved only 29 standards; and only 15 of those accounted for 75% of the violations cited. According to Robbins, most violations generally involve machine guarding, electrical, fire extinguishers, floor and wall openings, walking and working surfaces, and flammable and combustible liquids—"violations that represent real hazards."

An OSHA survey of violations involving standards related to training requirements shows that the medical and first aid category is the major problem area, followed by power trucks and motor vehicles,

Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA) officials are in the process of changing their inspection program procedure from that of targeting industry-wide hazards to zeroing in on most frequently violated standards—across the board.

equipment operation, and general requirements, among others.

The OSHA inspectors have also been forced by circumstances to sacrifice many of the "random" inspections they had planned to make, mainly because of the numerous recent catastrophes—including several deaths during construction at Chicago's Sears Tower and those in the New York Board of Water Supply's new water tunnel under Manhattan—that have occurred this year. "The randoms have suffered," Dwyer conceded, "there is no reason to think these will pick up."

Dwyer is currently talking to numerous industry, social, and union groups around the country in an effort to expand the information that is getting out about OSHA. He is offering to supply data on inspections to anyone requesting it.

He also said that, in spite of some court setbacks, the program of transferring inspection responsibilities from the federal government to the states is succeeding. Most states have submitted OSHA enforcement plans for approval, and nine have been approved to date. In the interim, federal OSHA officials have contracted with individual states to provide the necessary inspection for enforcing OSHA statutes until individual state plans are approved.

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Asbestos information group cites British doctors' denial of charges

Reprinted from BNA's Occupational Health & Safety Reporter

The assault on the asbestos standard by Dr. Irving J. Selikoff of the Mount Sinai School of Medicine, New York, was unjustified, Matthew Swetonic, executive secretary, Asbestos Information Association of North America, wrote Assistant Labor Secretary John H. Stender on July 24.

The present permissible concentration of asbestos of five fibers per cubic centimeter will remain in effect until July 1, 1976, under the asbestos standard adopted by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration in June 1972 (Reference File 31:5304). The two fiber standard is due to take effect in 1976.

It is well known that OSHA intends to review the standard, Swetonic said. Many doctors and representatives of organized labor have unjustifiably

attacked the standards as being totally insufficient to protect asbestos workers. The most serious assault was delivered by Selikoff at the 1973 American Industrial Hygiene Association Conference.

Selikoff maintained that new research in Great Britain proved that the British Occupational Hygiene Society (BOHS) recommended two fiber standard, upon which the OSHA standard is largely based, was no longer adequate as a safe exposure level, Swetonic said. Because of the seriousness of this allegation, Selikoff's comments were brought to the attention of those doctors in Great Britain whose research was being interpreted. On July 12, a letter from Dr. H. C. Lewinson and Dr. S. Holmes was sent to Selikoff pointing out serious errors in his interpretation of their research data.

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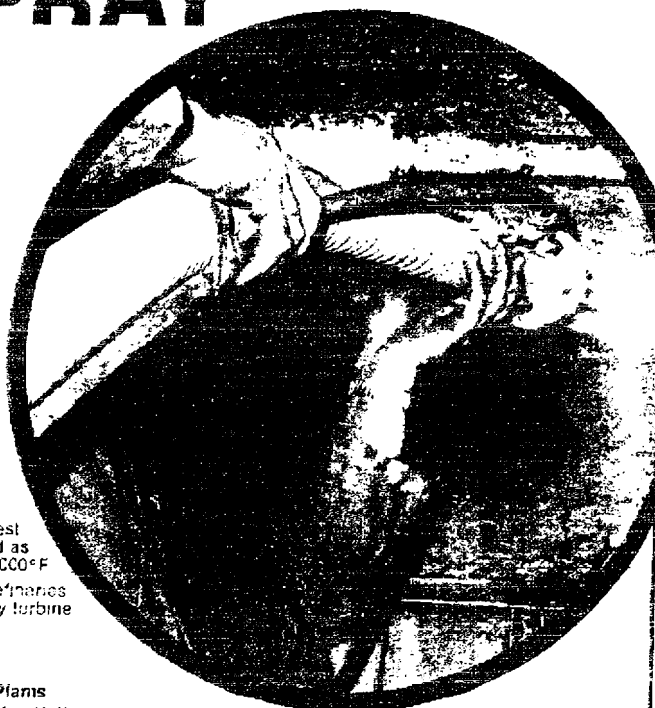
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British Comment

In their letter to Selikoff, the British doctors said "We are also very displeased at the manner in which you have used the information we provided in order to launch what appears to us to be a political campaign in the U.S.A. aimed at discrediting our Hygiene Standard for asbestos. We cannot accept the implication that the HCL (H. C. Lewinsohn) publication allows doubt to be cast on the

validity of the BOHS standard and are of the opinion that such a conclusion is unwarranted."

Swetonic told Stender that because several OSHA personnel attended the AIIIA meeting, it was imperative that OSHA be immediately informed of the true state of affairs with regard to this situation so that Selikoff's comments could be evaluated in their proper light.

Asbestos in lungs now detectable

This clipping was submitted by Palmer Covil who informed us . . . "it is out of a medical magazine. One of the local doctors gave this to us."

One of the basic problems facing asbestos workers, and others subject to inhalation of asbestos particles, is that there has been no way physicians could determine whether accumulations of asbestos in the lungs have occurred until cancer develops, possibly as many as 20 or more years later. Now a researcher at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology has developed a technique, using magnetic

detection methods, to determine if asbestos workers have large, potentially harmful accumulations. Noting that chrysotile asbestos (which constitutes about 95 percent of the world's supply) is ferromagnetic, David Cohen, Ph.D., reasoned that a magnetometer could be used to detect unhealthy accumulations of asbestos in the lungs. This is not a result of the intrinsic properties of asbestos; it is traceable to highly ferromagnetic magnetite particles that adhere to, and are seldom separated from, the asbestos fibers in the vein from which asbestos is mined. Thus, by use of a simple commercial magnetometer—such as those now used at airports to screen skyjackers—these ferromagnetic deposits can be detected long before any sign of asbestos would show up on chest X rays.



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