

Eaton Corporation, Air Flex Plant

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It is imperative that all operations that involve cutting, milling, and sanding of materials that contain asbestos be locally ventilated. The dust collector used must be designed for collection of asbestos fibers. Any shop vacuum should not be used for localized ventilation and especially one not equipped with a filter designed for asbestos fiber collection. A collector not approved for collection of asbestos fibers may actually make matters worse since the fibers may pass through the filters and spread asbestos fibers over a larger area. Exhaust ventilation must comply with ANSI 29.2-1971.

While the present OSHA standard, 29 CFR 1910.1001, limits workers' asbestos exposure to two fibers greater than five micrometers in length per cubic centimeter (fibers >5 /cc), many health experts believe that there may not be a safe level for carcinogen exposure. OSHA has proposed a new asbestos standard that may lower the Permissible Exposure Limit down to 0.2 fibers >5 /cc.

For the asbestos levels found on this day of monitoring, additional worker protection may be afforded by using a reusable or single-use air purifying respirator.

Engineering controls should be used whenever feasible to maintain airborne contaminant concentrations below the recommended standards. Compliance with the permissible exposure limits by the use of respirators is only permitted while required engineering controls are being installed or tested, when non-routine maintenance or repair is being accomplished, or during emergencies. The reasons that respirators can only be used as an interim control are: (1) So many factors affect obtaining a proper fit. For example beards, sideburns, eyeglasses, the absence of dentures, etc., prevent a proper face seal and thus completely negate a respirator's usefulness. (2) Respirators can cause wearer discomfort. (3) Respirators cause resistance to breathing.

When properly selected, used, and maintained, respirators can also provide added protection for workers who are exposed to contaminants below a standard. Although their use is not mandated by law in such cases, prudent Industrial Hygiene practice supports the need for their use regardless of the level of contaminant present. That position is based on the fact that no known safe level of exposure exists for exposure to a carcinogen. Consequently, when working with any known or suspected cancer causing agent, all precautions to include the use of a proper respirator should be implemented. Publications are available from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) which are routinely updated, listing those respirators certified by NIOSH and their uses.

Whenever respirators are used in a plant, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) requirements include a written