

J. W. Wolter

CURRENT REPORT

Asbestos

OSHA TO ISSUE SEPARATE RULES FOR CONSTRUCTION, GENERAL INDUSTRY

Two separate asbestos exposure standards, one covering the construction industry and the other covering general industry and maritime establishments, will be issued by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, Assistant Secretary of Labor Robert Rowland said March 19.

The announcement, made at a meeting of the Advisory Committee on Construction Safety and Health, is the first time the agency said it would publish two regulations.

OSHA hopes to publish the final rules simultaneously by this fall, according to an agency statement. An April 1984 proposal to revise the current asbestos standard would reduce exposure from 2 fibers per cubic centimeter of air averaged over an eight-hour work shift to either 0.5 f/cc or 0.2 f/cc (Current Report, April 13, 1984, p. 25).

At the advisory committee meeting, Deputy Director of Health Standards John Martonik remarked that OSHA is still considering whether to have a separate exposure limit for construction.

In the statement, OSHA noted that exposure at factories and construction sites differ. "Conditions at construction sites change continually, may be affected by weather variations and typically involve multiple employers. Conditions at fixed sites are relatively constant and usually only one employer is responsible. Fixed sites also have services and facilities such as showers, locker rooms, and lunchrooms available while construction sites do not. High labor turnover in construction is another important difference."

Dioxin

DOW AGREES TO INTERIM MEASURES FOR CLEANUP OF PLANT CONTAMINATION

Dow Chemical Co. March 13 agreed to carry out interim measures to prevent the migration of 2,3,7,8-tetrachlorodibenzo-p-dioxin (TCDD) from two areas at the company's plant in Midland, Mich., according to Environmental Protection Agency's Region V in Chicago.

Dow entered into an administrative consent order with EPA and Michigan that requires covering contaminated soils at two areas at the company's Midland plant. The parties are discussing terms of another agreement on a long-term remedial solution to the contamination at the Midland facility, according to Region V. The order was taken under Section 106 of the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (superfund law).

Dow manufactured 2,4,5-trichlorophenol (2,4,5-TCP) and several pesticide derivatives from 1946 to 1979 at the Midland facility. TCDD is known to be associated with the manufacture of these chemicals, according to EPA. Samples taken by Dow and the agency during 1983 and 1984 showed that, in the two areas of the plant subject to the consent order, surface soils were contaminated with TCDD of up to 52 parts per billion. Levels of 5 to 7 ppb in industrial areas and levels of 1 ppb or higher in residential areas are considered to present unacceptable health risks, according to EPA.

In September 1984, a study by EPA and Michigan showed that TCDD in carp in the Tittabawassee River exceed the Food and Drug Administration-recommended fish consumption levels of 50 parts per trillion, EPA said (Current Report, March 18, 1983, p. 1388).

Requirements of Order

According to the consent order, Dow will:

- Cover the soils contaminated with TCDD at the 2,4,5-TCP process area near 11th and J Streets, and at the 477-building area, 17th and G Steets, in Midland;
- Conduct soil sampling before covering the contaminated soil at the 2,4,5-TCP process area to determine the extent of contamination;
- Remove construction debris from the 2,4,5-TCP process area;
- Complete soil analysis of samples taken from the 477-building area; and
- Provide monthly progress reports.

Comments on the consent order may be submitted until April 17 to Vanessa Musgrave, EPA Region V, 230 South Dearborn St., Chicago, Ill. 60604; (312) 886-4359.

Health Hazards

EDB RULE PREDICTED FOR LATE SUMMER; FORMALDEHYDE NOTICE TO APPEAR SHORTLY

A final standard for ethylene dibromide will not be published at least until late summer, an official of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration said March 15, but an advance notice of proposed rulemaking on formaldehyde is expected within two weeks.

OSHA proposed in October 1983 to lower the permissible exposure limit for EDB from 20 parts per million to 0.1 ppm averaged over eight hours, and to set a short-term exposure limit of 0.5 ppm averaged over 15 minutes (Current Report, Oct. 14, 1983, p. 896). A timetable on the status of health standards, prepared by the agency last December, set April 1985 as the projected time for a final rule.

OSHA Deputy Administrator Patrick Tyson told BNA a month-old draft standard is being circulated among OSHA directors, and the agency is awaiting comments on peer review. There might be a redraft, after which a target publication date would be late summer 1985, he said.

Tyson also told BNA an advance notice of proposed rulemaking for formaldehyde should be out within two weeks. The U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit last month ordered OSHA to comply with a rulemaking timetable the agency submitted in August 1984 (Feb. 15, p. 1367).

Research

WHITE HOUSE REPORT CALLS FOR MORE SUPPORT IN PREDICTIVE ECOLOGY, TOXICS EFFECTS RESEARCH

Substantially increased research support is needed in coming years to expand the science of ecological risk assessment — especially for the harnessing of biotechnology — and protection of biological systems from the effects of toxic materials, according to a White House report released March 18.

The report on the nation's long-term environmental research needs, prepared by the Council on Environmental Quality at the request of the Environmental Protection Agency, comprised a shopping list of research goals to which the council said "substantial increased attention should be devoted."

The recommendations resulted from meetings held during 1984 by four scientific panels as part of an interagency committee on long-term environmental research and development. Participating agencies included the National Sci-