Tox File - Asbestos

HEALTH STANDARDS UPDATE: AUGUST 1984

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BENZENE

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While the mediation effort continues, there has been little progress toward the completion of a final version of the benzene standard. OSHA and OMB have disagreed on several elements of a final standard including respirators, medical surveillance, and risk. At present the standard is at OSHA.

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OSHA has a field directive ready for publication that will give compliance officers guidance in applying the requirements for engineering and work practice controls to reduce employee exposure to airborne lead to the lowest feasible level even if they are not sufficient to reach the PEL. OSHA is allowing a degree of flexibility in complying with this requirement. If an employer has initiated a long-range study of options for reducing employee exposures to lead, they would not be cited for failure to meet the deadline for preparation of compliance plans in primary and secondary lead smelting and battery manufacturing.

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FORMALDEHYDE

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In 1983 the UAW petitioned the court to force OSHA to issue an ETS for formaldehyde. In defending its denial of an ETS, the agency told the court that there was insufficient evidence to justify a finding of grave danger.

On July 12, 1984 the UAW petitioned the U.S. District Court to set an October 2, 1984 deadline by which OSHA would have to respond to the unions request for an ETS on formaldehyde. OSHA has ten days in which to respond to the petition.

The court told OSHA to review the scientific evidence and see how it related to its regulatory options. OSHA responded that it would need at least four months to study the justification for an ETS and at least nine months to consider the need for a regular rulemaking. The court responded by requiring OSHA to prepare a time-table outlining when its regulatory decision making would be complete and to submit it to the court by August 10, 1984.

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RESPIRATORS

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The STEL was deleted from the standard at the last moment, causing some parts of the standard to read strangely. The deletion of the STEL came largely because OSHA had a very weak justification for a STEL, and as a result of the inability of the Office of Managment and Budget (OMB) and OSHA to agree on the extent to which the use of respirators was to be allowed in the standard. OSHA insisted on the maximum use of engineering controls, and OMB on the equivalent use of respirators.

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UCC 010755

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