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Standards and Regulations

Workplace

- The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) standard for asbestos in the workplace is 0.1 fibers/cc of air as an 8-hour TWA.

Widespread evidence of asbestos-associated disease in workers was found in the 1930s. A standard for exposure was not established in this country until 1960, but only in selected industries. In 1971, the standard was extended industry-wide. A 1968 British study judged that exposure to 2 fibers per cubic centimeter of air (fibers/cc) for the duration of a person's work life would result in an approximate 1% risk for asbestosis. This was an underestimation, but nonetheless led to the establishment of the 1976 U.S. standard of 2 fibers/cc as a time-weighted average (TWA). Further study of carcinogenicity resulted in the OSHA standard of 0.2 fibers/cc (8-hour TWA) that became effective in 1986. The level at which employers must take action to reduce employee exposure (termed "action level") is 0.1 fibers/cc (8-hour TWA).

Environment

- The EPA maximum contaminant level (MCL) for asbestos in drinking water is 7 million fibers per liter of water.

The difficulties of controlling asbestos exposure in the workplace are paralleled in the general environment. EPA recommends "no visible emissions." In 1973, EPA banned spraying of asbestos in building interiors. No regulations for asbestos in potable water exist. The EPA proposed MCL for asbestos in drinking water is 7 million fibers (>10 microns in length) per liter of water.

The Asbestos in Schools Identification and Notification Act of 1982 requires that local education agencies inspect for friable material, analyze these materials for asbestos content, post results and notify parents and employees if asbestos is found, and maintain appropriate records. A recent study indicating that power-buffing and power-stripping of asbestos-tile floors in schools produces significant airborne-asbestos levels prompted an EPA warning to school communities. Floor

maintenance will henceforth be performed by hand to prevent the release of fibers.

To protect both themselves and the environment, asbestos remediation workers should be trained to handle asbestos properly.

For a printer-friendly version of the **Asbestos Toxicity Case Study**, download the [PDF version](#).

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