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State curbs asbestos

California contractors protest sprayed fireproofing guidelines

A fight between California sprayed-asbestos contractors and the State Division of Industrial Safety is on because of the state's recent issuance of guidelines on the use of the sprayed fireproofing material. Two weeks ago, C.W. Farmer, supervising engineer for the State Division of Industrial Safety's construction section, circulated among his construction safety engineers an interoffice memo setting forth the proposed guidelines.

The guidelines, similar to New York City's recent regulations (ENR 4/16 p.12), provide for effective enclosure of spray areas, define cleanup and disposal procedures for waste asbestos materials, and call for fresh air supplied hoods for all workers in an asbestos contaminated spraying area. This last provision goes further than New York City's regulations, but Farmer says the hoods are available at a cost of $70 to $80 each and the air can be supplied by compressors normally available on a building project.

Some contractors who read the memo complained the guidelines were being sprung on them so suddenly that they were not prepared to meet the requirements.

Under California law, the guidelines are the same as safety regulations administratively adopted and are enforceable as law. Farmer, who met with contractors and manufacturers and distributors of safety equipment last week, is determined to go ahead with full enforcement of the guidelines by the end of July.

After the end of July, any guideline violation not corrected in a week could shut down a sprayed-asbestos operation, Farmer says. Contractors can appeal an order for a shutdown, but work must be stopped until a hearing is held by the State Division of Industrial Safety.

Farmer says that the state will try to be reasonable and if a contractor happens to be out of step with the guidelines on a current job and is to finish up in the next few weeks, it will be told the orders will be effective on its next job. After concluding his meeting with the contractors, Farmer asked them to continue talks with his engineers and said that if further information is developed to indicate that the guidelines can be changed without increasing hazards, he will consider it.