

 Air Products and Chemicals

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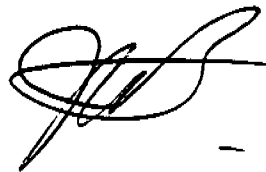
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adopted. The inflationary impact statement was prepared for OSHA by Arthur Young & Co., Washington, D.C.

The three alternative standards studied were 0.1 mg As/m³, 0.05 mg As/m³ and 0.004 mg As/m³. OSHA has proposed the latter standard on an eight-hour time-weighted average.

"However, these estimated compliance costs are not uniform across the affected industries," the executive summary of the study noted. "The smelters are estimated to incur annual costs of \$7.1 million, \$26.9 million and \$42.1 million, respectively. ASARCO-Tacoma alone would incur \$3.2 million, \$7.4 million and \$9.9 million of this estimated annual cost. The wood preservative industry is estimated to incur \$9.2 million, \$19.2 million and \$30.8 million of this estimated annual cost.

"Based upon the magnitude of these estimated compliance costs and a review of market factors in the industry segments, it is unlikely that either the producer or the users of metallic arsenic and arsenic trioxide would absorb these costs. ASARCO's actions would significantly affect the domestic price of metallic arsenic and arsenic trioxide.

"However, changes in the prices charged by ASARCO would lead to changes in the domestic demand satisfied by foreign suppliers. Similarly, increases in ASARCO's price and the added costs of compliance in the other industry segments will affect the prices and amounts produced in those segments (and ultimately have an impact on the consumer)."

NIOSH estimates that about 1,500,000 workers are exposed to inorganic arsenic. OSHA has set a hearing on the arsenic standard to begin August 24 in Washington.

NOISE CONTROLS TO BE EXPENSIVE, BUT STANDARD IS UNLIKELY VERY SOON:

Don't hold your breath waiting for a final noise standard from OSHA. Following a hearing starting August 24, due to last for some time, the information will then be sifted by OSHA and then submitted to the top command of the Administration before it is proposed. And you can bet that the Office of Management and Budget will have a very large hand in the formulation of the final standard.

Don't be surprised if a standard of 85 dBA is ultimately proposed, but with a long lead time and with some form of ear protective devices permitted in an effort to reach that level. That's far from certain at the moment, but there is a growing belief in the agency that the means permitted to reach any level of exposure and the time allowed are more important than the actual numerical designation.

Meanwhile, OSHA released the inflationary impact statement prepared for it by Bolt, Beranek & Newman, Inc., Cambridge, Mass., providing cost estimates for meeting the standard under various scenarios. The figures really aren't all that important in attempting to determine a final cost estimate, plus the fact that they have been fudged, reworked and resubmitted so many times that they have become relatively meaningless.

The proposed regulation maintains the existing 90 dBA time-weighted exposure but adds a noise monitoring and audiometric testing requirement. Noise monitoring is estimated in the study to cost about \$155 million per year (\$12 per production worker), while audiometric testing for all workers presently exposed on a time-weighted basis to noise levels above 85 dBA will cost about \$86 million (\$20 per worker). Thus, it said, the present proposed regulation will cost a total of \$241 million annually.

"An 85 dBA regulation achieved solely by use of hearing protection would cost about \$43 million annually," it said. "If audiometric testing and monitoring were also required, the total annual cost would be \$284 million (\$241 million plus \$43 million).

"An 85 dBA regulation achieved through engineering controls would require an incremental investment of about \$8 billion. That is, the additional investment necessary to move from full compliance with a 90 dBA standard to full compliance with an 85 dBA standard is \$8 billion. The \$8 billion capital cost is expected to decrease as the compliance period is extended. Applying a 3 percent per year cost reduction for 10- and 15-year compliance periods reduces capital costs by 18 and 25 percent, respectively.

"In addition, the annual monitoring cost of \$155 million would continue; however, once an 85 dBA regulation is fully implemented, audiometric testing would no longer be necessary. Thus, the \$86 million annual cost for testing would not be incurred after compliance."

CONFERENCE ON WOMEN AT WORK RAISES IMPORTANT SOCIETAL ISSUES:

The meeting on Women and the Workplace June 17-19 sponsored by the Society for Occupational and Environmental Health and NIOSH raised a number of issues which cut across the spectrum of health,

economics, social and legal disciplines. More significantly, the presence of an increasingly larger number of young activists—male and female—in the occupational health field represents assurance that the issues will not go away, perhaps despite the wishes of many that they will.

Dr. Eula Bingham of the University of Cincinnati Medical School and co-chairperson of the meeting told us that translating the words at the meeting into forceful action will depend on the responsible activities of unions, the legal profession and the communications media—hopefully with the cooperation of industry.

As women move into positions of greater responsibility in each of those areas, the opportunity to foster greater understanding of the problem both within industry and the general public becomes correspondingly greater, she noted. But most important of all, she emphasized, it isn't just a case of sex discrimination, although there is little doubt that there is some of that; the problem affects males as well as females. The latter now constitute 40 percent of the nation's workforce.

Although much of the scientific information at the meeting centered on the special considerations which should govern the exposure of the pregnant worker, or the women of child-bearing age to be more precise, the need to protect the job rights of the women assumes equal importance. Just because a woman is of child-bearing age should not mean her automatic exclusion from jobs where she might be exposed to teratogenic or mutagenic chemicals because, as Claudia Prieve of the Steelworkers Union noted, many women do not want families at the moment and take protective actions, such as use of various contraceptive devices.

By all odds, a highlight of the meeting was the release of a report by Andrea Hricko of the Labor Occupational Health Program, University of California, entitled "Working for Your Life: A Woman's Guide to Job Health Hazards." It was produced jointly with Public Citizen's Health Research Group.

The book is divided into five parts: characteristics and needs of women workers; how your job can affect your health; how your job may affect your ability to have healthy children; hazards on jobs where large numbers of women work; some ways to recognize hazards and make changes at your workplace. On the whole, the book avoids emotional binges and sticks to presentation of actualities. It will undoubtedly be the bible in future guidance for women at work in industry.

Another interesting presentation came from Dr. Leon Warshaw, vice president and corporate medical director of Equitable Life Assurance Society. He disclosed formation of a group of physicians under the aegis of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists who would undertake to develop a series of guidelines for physicians on the known and suspected health hazards associated with work (in the broadest use of the term) during pregnancy.

Serving on task forces would be non-physicians as well, including representatives of unions and consumer groups with an interest in placement of pregnant women at work and even the safety of products in the home with which the pregnant woman might have contact. It would not undertake to tell anyone how to treat the work-associated conditions of pregnancy but would simply make available the health information. Many obstetricians, it was pointed out, do not take into consideration the special problems the pregnant woman might encounter at work or at home in their management of the case, and the information is designed to help them. NIOSH is understood to be considering a grant to the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists for the project.

CANCER DEATHS AMONG WORKERS IN PLUTONIUM PLANTS TABULATED IN NEW STUDY:

A report on autopsies conducted among 42 former plutonium workers throughout the United States, of whom at least one-third had died of cancer, has been published.

The study was conducted by Dr. W.D. Norwood and C.E. Newton. They warned against drawing any definitive or causal link between plutonium and cancer, declaring that 42 autopsies represented too small a number for such conclusions.

It was based on the autopsies of 33 former Rocky Flats (Colo.) workers at a plant now operated by Rockwell International but formerly by Dow Chemical, eight former employees of the Hanford plant in Richland, Wash., and one ex-worker at the Mound Laboratories in Miamisburg, Ohio.

In a paper submitted for publication to *Lancet*, the British medical journal, Dr. Sidney M. Wolfe of Public Citizen's Health Research Group, referred to Dr. Norwood's earlier study of 30 autopsies which concluded that "the usual causes of death were encountered."