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State to Enact Asbestos Rules

BY PAMELA ZEKMAN
The Illinois department of labor recently announced stringent regulations on the construction industry to reduce the health hazard of asbestos—a substance used in fireproofing materials that is linked to cancer.

The regulations, similar to those enacted in New York last April, will become effective August 1. They are designed to reduce exposure to asbestos dust particles that circulate in the air or fall to the floor and stairwells when sprayed on girders, walls and ceilings.

The action was the result of medical studies, some dating back to 1964, which warned of the potential health hazard of inhaling asbestos and said exposure can lead to cancer and to asbestosis, a heart disease.

Associated at Meeting

The new regulations were announced by Nathan Willens, hygiene supervisor, and Edward Stevenson, construction unit supervisor, of the labor department during a meeting with representatives of the construction industry.

Willens reported that after two months of research he concluded that "all medical evidence we can find says a potential hazard exists from inhaling this dust. We are taking these precautions as a safety measure."

He added that asbestos can be harmful to persons by as well as construction crews who breathe in the excess dust. Requirements for workers who "do asbestos," Willens said, will be to wear a respirator.

was an area being sprayed so soon showed slide photographs. The photographs showed dust. Manufacturers of fireproofing that no particles can escape. of "typical" construction sites straying outward from work material and two asbestos free This includes stairwells and in Chicago which depicted closed areas, accumulating on products have been developed sloppy "housekeeping" by floors, rails, stairways, and in and others are being worked workers. elevator shafts.

Covers must also be placed over all objects in the immediate area and sprayers are required to wear coveralls and respirators.

Excess dust must be immediately vacuumed after work is completed and placed in a sealed container for disposal at an approved site. Warning signs must be placed at all entrances to the area while work is underway.

Deaths Linked to Asbestos
In announcing the rules Willens reported that 10 of the 35 deaths among members of the local asbestos workers' union between January 1967 and June 30 may be linked to asbestos. Thirteen died of cancer and six of asbestosis.

"This is what caused my real concern," Willens said. "We are trying to protect workers in Illinois from the hazards of working with this substance."

Willens cited one study that concluded, "Inhalation of asbestos over a period of years can result in serious lung difficulties and can affect all people in the area where it is used."

He said another study, noted a "particular danger" for workers who combine smoking with exposure to asbestos.

Illnesses of Mrs. Thomas
"A woman who does both has a three times more chance of getting lung cancer than one who does neither," Willens said.

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