

seven Southern states was extended by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration for "an indefinite period not to exceed July 1, 1984."

Agency field staff were told of the extension Jan. 16 in OSHA Notice TED 3.

The exemption program, currently in effect in Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, Oklahoma, and Texas, had been scheduled to end Jan. 1 (Current Report, July 14, 1983, p. 158).

Under the pilot project, a company located in OSHA Region IV or VI will be exempted from a general schedule inspection if it requests comprehensive on-site consultation, takes action to correct hazards found in the consultation visit, and conducts an effective safety and health program. The program is intended to "encourage greater use of the consultation services and thereby expand the total number of workplaces reached by OSHA programs," the agency noted.

The experimental program began in 1982 (Current Report, July 15, 1982, p. 148), and originally was scheduled to end in January 1983. This deadline subsequently was extended to July 1983, and then to January 1, 1984.

In October, OSHA proposed revisions to its on-site consultation requirements in 29 CFR Part 1908 that would establish a nationwide exemption program similar to the pilot project (Current Report, Oct. 13, 1983, p. 435). The period for public comment on the proposal closed last month.

Asbestos

OSHA'S EMERGENCY STANDARD FOR ASBESTOS DRAWS MIXED REVIEWS FROM INDUSTRY, LABOR

Diverse views were expressed on the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's emergency temporary standard for workplace exposure to asbestos, with some groups urging a less stringent permanent rule and others pressing for a tougher permanent standard.

The agency's ETS lowering the permissible workplace exposure limit for asbestos to 0.5 fiber per cubic centimeter of air was issued Nov. 4, but was stayed by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit Nov. 23 pending a decision on a challenge to the rule by the Asbestos Information Association (Current Report, Nov. 10, 1983, p. 587; Dec. 1, 1983, p. 691). The standard would permit employers to achieve the reduced level through "any feasible combination of engineering controls, work practices, and personal protective equipment and devices." OSHA requested comments on the proposed revisions to the permanent standard made by the emergency rule by Jan. 3.

The R.T. Vanderbilt Company, Inc., New York, N.Y., urged that the current standard be reviewed and revised to clearly distinguish between the asbestiform and the non-asbestiform varieties of each mineral included in the standard's definition of asbestos. In addition, the standard should include a more scientifically precise method of identifying asbestiform fibers based not on aspect ratio alone, but rather on physical, chemical, and mineralogical properties, the company said.

The Associated General Contractors of St. Louis, Mo., stated that making the asbestos standard more stringent will not increase compliance. Noting doubts on the part of several members, the AGC questioned whether full compliance with the existing standard is possible.

William Weiss, of the Division of Occupational Medicine, Hahnemann University School of Medicine, asserted that there was "a significant amount of bias" in the assessment

of epidemiologic evidence contained in the emergency temporary standard. "I note a tendency to minimize studies that show little risk and to emphasize those reporting high risks, especially with regard to fiber type, with regard to the alleged causal relationship between asbestos and gastrointestinal cancer," Weiss said.

There is incomplete review of the pertinent literature with regard to the importance of smoking in the risk of asbestosis, he added.

"While I believe that the standard for asbestos should reduce exposure to the lowest feasible level, I think that the assessment of the scientific evidence on the adverse health effects of asbestos should be made in an objective manner," Weiss concluded.

Carpenters' Union Urges Lower PEL

The Eaton Corporation, Kalamazoo, Mich., endorsed the 0.5 f/cc emergency temporary standard for asbestos, but urged OSHA "not to impose more stringent regulations on asbestos without giving our industry sufficient time to develop and test new materials." Eaton added that, if OSHA is considering an asbestos fiber regulation which would approach the 0.1 f/cc level, it should be done in a reasonable time frame, providing adequate time to the trucking industry to find non-asbestos friction materials which are safe and appropriate for application to foundation brakes.

The United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America commended OSHA for issuing an ETS, but stated that the protection which it provided was inadequate and that an exposure level of 100,000 fibers per cubic meter is needed rather than the 500,000 f/cm provided in the ETS. The union stated that there is ample evidence that use of standardized counting and sampling methodology can easily produce accurate, reproducible results down to the 100,000 f/cm level.

In addition, the union objected to the substitution of respirators for the use of feasible engineering controls since the ETS only mandated the use of engineering controls "whenever feasible." "Feasible engineering controls exist for most asbestos dust-producing operations and should be mandated before we start requiring the use of respirators," the union said.

The carpenters' union also criticized the ETS because it assumed "totally inaccurate" protection factors for the required respirators. The group argued that since the single-use dust masks cannot be fit tested and provide no seal, assigning them any protection factor is "dubious." Assumed protection factors for powered air-purifying respirators were challenged also.

The union concluded that the final rule should address adaptation of the standard to construction and endorsed the construction asbestos proposal submitted to OSHA by the Building and Construction Trades Department, AFL-CIO in November 1983.

The Environmental Health Protection Division of the San Diego County Department of Health Services praised the ETS as being "long overdue," but recommended that a further reduction to 0.1 f/cc as an eight-hour average be adopted in the final rule as a feasible level.

Dioxin

BULK OF WORK COMPLETED ON REGISTRY; MID-1985 STUDY COMPLETION STILL EYED

Compilation of a major registry of all U.S. herbicide production workers who may have been exposed to dioxin