



National Safety Council

Automotive, Tooling, Metalworking and Associated Industries Newsletter

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Minimizing Asbestos Exposures and Hazards in the Workplace

In the Federal Register of October 17, 1979, a notice appeared that the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) were publishing proposed rules regarding asbestos exposure in consumer products. Both these agencies have previously taken action to control human exposure to asbestos, but are still concerned about asbestos exposure from many separate sources.

In industry, we must also be concerned about asbestos exposure. The following safety information data will hopefully serve as a reference for you to investigate potential sources of asbestos exposure in your facilities.

The information that follows comes from the safety information sheet of a member company in the Automotive, Tooling and Metalworking Section.

Definition

The term "asbestos" applies to the minerals of chrysotile, amosite, crocidolite, tremolite, anthophyllite and actinolite. Ninety percent of the asbestos used in industry is chrysotile.

Hazard

Asbestos is a known cancer-causing agent and can cause other related diseases such as asbestosis, mesothelioma of the pleura or peritoneum and gastrointestinal disease. Smoking significantly increases the risk, although not every person exposed to asbestos will develop cancer.

Allowable Concentrations

Asbestos is measured in fibers greater than five microns in length per cubic centimeter of air. The current OSHA allowable concentration in effect since July, 1972 is two fibers longer than five micrometers per cubic centimeter of air over an eight-hour time weighted average. The ceiling concentration is ten fibers longer than five micrometers per cubic centimeter of air; however a lower level has been proposed, but not yet promulgated.

Procurement

The inhalation of asbestos-containing materials is potentially hazardous. Therefore, asbestos-containing materials should be replaced with substitute material whenever possible. If substitution is impossible, then engineering or administrative controls shall be attempted or personal protective equipment shall be used.

Certain products used in industry contain asbestos. Some of those listed in the Federal Register are: acoustical ceiling tile, roofing, piper and boiler coverings, insulation materials, electric switch boxes, gasket or seal materials, oven or kiln linings, some types of electrical wiring, flame resistant clothing, adhesives, caulks, certain cements and patching compounds, clutch plates, brake linings and radiator sealant.

Storing and Handling

Asbestos-containing materials shall be stored in areas designated and

identified for these materials only. Such materials shall be stored in closed containers or otherwise packaged in such a way to prevent generation of asbestos fibers.

Asbestos-containing materials shall be transported in the least hazardous manner feasible, meaning sealed, totally packaged, labeled, covered, and so on.

Using Asbestos

Prior to starting any job in which asbestos-containing materials are to be used or handled, either for production or maintenance, the safety department should be notified. These also include any jobs that are subcontracted.

The safety department, in turn, must:

1. Provide personnel monitoring as needed;
2. Determine engineering needs or personnel protective equipment as needed;
3. Assure that personnel are informed and properly trained;
4. Recommend appropriate control measures;
5. Assure that the appropriate control measures are followed;
6. See that compressed air or gases are not used for cleanup;
7. Assure that all asbestos-containing materials, including wastes, are labeled, treated and properly disposed of in impermeable containers;
8. Assure that proper signage, barriers and barricades are posted at

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444 North Michigan Avenue
Chicago, Illinois 60611
312-527-4800

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