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ASBESTOS HEALTH HAZARDS

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health of the U. S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare has issued a warning on the potential health hazard for persons exposed to asbestos during the servicing of motor vehicle brake and clutch assemblies. According to the notice received, data presented by investigators from the Mount Sinai School of Medicine in New York City indicated that workers engaged in such activities are exposed to potentially hazardous levels of airborne asbestos dust. Specific brake servicing operations studied included blow-out of automobile drum brake assemblies, grinding of used truck brake linings, and bevelling of new truck brake linings.

The full extent of asbestos-related disease in brake servicing personnel is not known at present because this particular occupational group has not been systematically studied up to now. However, a review of the scientific literature on the association between asbestos exposure and mesothelial tumors of the pleura and peritoneum has revealed at least four cases of these rare tumors in persons who were employed in jobs involving automobile brake servicing.

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) has issued "Recommended (Interim) Procedures for Asbestos Brake and Clutch Servicing". For a copy of these recommendations, write to ASIA and refer to MB-Q-18.

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Brake linings, and pads and clutch assemblies are made of asbestos, which has long been recognized as a material producing a hazard to the health of those who inhale its dust in excessive amounts over a long period of time. During the last few years, however, attention has been focused on the development of cancer of the lung and other body areas following exposure to asbestos dust.

An alert concerning the potential health hazard for persons exposed to asbestos during the servicing of motor vehicle brake and clutch assemblies was issued by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health on August 8, 1975. NIOSH cited four cases of rare mesothelial tumors of the pleura and peritoneum in persons who were employed in jobs involving brake servicing. This rare type of cancer in the membrane around the lung causes 1 in 10,000 deaths in the general populace. But one study of 632 asbestos workers found that 32 (1 out of 20) had died of mesothelioma. Asbestos also causes lung cancer; and an asbestos worker who smokes is 90 times more likely to get lung cancer.

The full extent of asbestos-related disease in brake servicing personnel is not known because this group has never before been systematically studied. Excessive dust concentrations measured at operations, such as blow-out of automobile drum brake assemblies, grinding of used truck brake linings, bevelling of new truck brake linings, and arcing of new auto brake linings, together with mesothelial tumors in persons so employed, affirms the necessity for effectively controlling the exposure.

At present we do not have complete information on how much exposure, if any, can be tolerated; and so it is important to eliminate exposures whenever possible and minimize those which cannot be eliminated. Recommended practices are listed below.

1. During brake servicing, an air purifying respirator, either single use or with replaceable particulate filters(s), as approved by the Mining Enforcement and Safety Administration (formerly Bureau of Mines) or NIOSH, should be worn during all procedures starting with the removal of the wheels and including reassembly. During manual clutch servicing, such a respirator should be worn during removal and cleaning of the clutch, pressure plate and housing assembly and during installation of the new clutch assembly. This should also include any arcing or riveting operations.

2. Dust should first be cleaned from brake drums, brake backing plates, brake assemblies and clutch assemblies using an industrial type vacuum cleaner equipped with a high efficiency filter system (greater than 99 percent efficiency for 0.3 μm diameter aerosols). After vacuum cleaning, any remaining dust should be removed using a rag soaked in water and wrung until nearly dry. Under no circumstances should compressed air or dry brushing be used for cleaning.

3. Avoid grinding or arcing wherever possible. Some brake repair shops do no grinding at all. When grinding is performed the grinding (arcing) machine should be equipped with local exhaust ventilation. At a minimum, the dust

bag of the arcing machine shall be removed and replaced with the hose of the high efficiency industrial vacuum described above.

4 All floor cleaning in areas, where brakes and clutches are repaired should be done with the high efficiency industrial vacuum cleaner as described above. Grinding (arcing) machines should also be cleaned with such a vacuum cleaner and any remaining dust wiped with a damp cloth. An approved respirator as described above, should be used during this cleaning.

In addition to those measures NIOSH also recommends the following procedures:

5 If possible, an area should be designated for all brake and clutch repairs. Entrances into this area should be posted with an asbestos exposure warning sign as follows:

Asbestos
Dust Hazard
Avoid Breathing Dust
Wear Assigned Protective Equipment
Do Not Remain in Area
Unless Your Work Requires It
Breathing Asbestos Dust May Cause
Asbestosis and Cancer

6 Industrial vacuum cleaner bags containing asbestos dust and cloths used for wiping brake and clutch assemblies should be sealed in plastic bags and labeled with the following warning label printed in letters of sufficient size and contrast to be readily visible and legible:

Caution
Contains Asbestos Fibers
Avoid Breathing Dust
Breathing Asbestos Dust May Cause
Asbestosis and Cancer

During removal of vacuum bags an approved respirator, as described above, should be worn.

7 Although adherence to the above procedures should minimize any contamination of work clothing, it is recommended that the appropriate portions of the OSHA regulations on asbestos (29 CFR 1910.1001 (21) (3) and (4)) concerning special clothing, change rooms, etc. be followed. These call for special clothing including coveralls, head covering, gloves and foot covering to be provided, along with separate lockers for work clothes and street clothes. They also specify a change room, transportation of contaminated clothing in sealed labeled bags to the laundry, and notification of the laundry that the clothing is contaminated with asbestos.