

OSHA Issues New Beryllium Standards

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has issued new standards for General Industry, Construction, and Shipyards for the prevention of chronic beryllium disease and lung cancer in American workers. About 62,000 workers are exposed to beryllium in their workplaces. The majority of workers exposed are in General Industry operations such as beryllium metal and ceramic production, non-ferrous foundries, and fabrication of beryllium alloy products. Approximately 11,500 Construction and shipyard workers are exposed who may conduct abrasive blasting operations using slags that contain trace amounts of beryllium.

Key provisions of these rules are: (1) reduces the permissible exposure limit (PEL) for beryllium to 0.2 micrograms per cubic meter of air, averaged over 8-hour workday, and (2) establishes short term exposure limit (STEL) of 2.0 micrograms per cubic meter of air, over a 15-minute sampling period.

Employers are required to:

- Use engineering and work practice controls (such as ventilation or enclosures) to limit worker exposure to beryllium;
- Provide respirators when controls cannot adequately limit exposure;
- Limit worker access to high-exposure areas;
- Develop a written exposure control plan;
- Train workers on beryllium hazards; and
- Make available medical exams to monitor exposed workers and provide medical removal protection benefits to workers identified with a beryllium-related disease.

Both the General Industry 1910.1024 and Construction Industry 1926.1124 standards are similar, but there are industry-specific elements addressed within each standard which include:

- Competent person designation - 1926.
- Hygiene areas and practices (showers) - 1926.
- Communication of hazards - 1910.
- Disposal of contaminated material - 1910.
- Work areas - 1910.

Compliance to all three standards take effect on March 10, 2017, after which all three sectors (General Industry, Construction and Shipyards) have one year (March 12, 2018) to comply with most of the requirements. All sectors have two years (March 11, 2019) from the effective date to provide any required change rooms and showers, and three years (March 10, 2020) from the effective date to implement engineering controls.

If you have any questions or would like additional information on these standards please contact the National HAZMAT Program at 304-253-8674 or hazmat@iuoehazmat.org.

OSHA Releases Revised Silica Standards

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has issued two revised standards, Construction 1926.1153, and General Industry and Maritime 1910.1053, to reduce lung cancer, silicosis, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and kidney disease in workers by limiting their exposure to respirable crystalline silica.

About 2.3 million workers are exposed annually to respirable crystalline silica in their workplaces. Over 2 million construction workers drill, cut, crush, or grind silica-containing materials such as concrete and stone. Approximately 300,000 workers work in general industry operations such as brick manufacturing, foundries, and hydraulic fracturing, also known as fracking.

Provisions to both standards include (1) the reduction of the permissible exposure limit (PEL) for respirable crystalline silica to 50 micrograms per cubic meter of air, averaged over an 8-hour shift, and (2) requiring medical exams to monitor highly exposed workers to provide them information about their lung health. Employers are required to:

- Use engineering controls (such as water or ventilation) to limit worker exposure to the PEL.
- Provide respirators when engineering controls cannot adequately limit exposure.
- Limit worker access to high exposure areas.
- Develop a written exposure control plan.
- Offer medical exams to highly exposed workers.
- Train workers on silica risks and how to limit exposures.

In addition, there are industry-specific requirements including the establishment of an action level of 25 micrograms per cubic meter for workers exposed - 1910; and establishing specific exposure control measures when working with materials containing crystalline silica -1926.

Both standards became effective June 23, 2016, after which industries have the following schedule to comply with most requirements:

- Construction - June 23, 2017, one year after the effective date.
- General Industry and Maritime - June 23, 2018, two years after the effective date.
- Hydraulic Fracturing - June 23, 2018, two years after the effective date for all provisions except Engineering Controls, which has a compliance date of June 23, 2021.

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OSHA Updates General Industry's Walking-Working Surfaces and Fall Protection Standards

OSHA has issued a final rule on Walking-Working Surfaces and Personal Fall Protection Systems to better protect workers in General Industry from these hazards by updating and clarifying standards and adding training and inspection requirements. Falls from heights and on the same level (a working surface) are among the leading causes of serious work-related injuries and deaths. OSHA estimates the standard will prevent 29 fatalities and more than 5,842 injuries annually. The rule also increases consistency in safety and health standards for people working in both General and Construction Industries. Specifically, it updates General Industry standards addressing slip, trip, and fall hazards (1910 Subpart D), and adds requirements for personal fall protection systems (1910 Subpart I).

The rule provides greater flexibility in choosing a fall protection system; incorporates advances in technology, industry best practices, and national consensus standards to provide effective and cost-efficient worker protection; and eliminates the existing mandate to use guardrails as a primary fall protection method. The rule also allows employers to choose from accepted fall protection systems they believe will work best in a particular situation, and to use non-conventional fall protection in certain situations, such as designated areas on low-slope roofs.

As much as possible, OSHA has aligned fall protection requirements for General Industry with those for Construction, easing confusion and compliance for employers who perform both types of activities. For example, the final rule replaces the outdated General Industry scaffold standards with a requirement that employers comply with OSHA's Construction scaffold standards. It does not change the Construction or Agricultural standards.

The rule takes effect January 17, 2017, and will affect approximately 112 million workers at seven million worksites. However, some provisions have delayed effective dates, including:

- Ensuring exposed workers are trained on fall hazards (6 months).
- Ensuring workers who use equipment covered by the final rule are trained (6 months).
- Inspecting and certifying permanent anchorages for rope descent systems (1 year).
- Installing personal fall arrest or ladder safety systems on new fixed ladders over 24 feet and on replacement ladders/ladder sections, including fixed ladders on outdoor advertising structures (2 years).
- Ensuring existing fixed ladders over 24 feet, including those on outdoor advertising structures, are equipped with a cage, well, personal fall arrest system, or ladder safety system (2 years).

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