FOREWARD

In recent years, several agencies of the federal government have inquired into the safe use of asbestos in view of the risk to health that arises from excessive exposure to asbestos--that is, uncontrolled fibers in the workplace and the community environment. From these studies have come regulations to protect employees who work with asbestos. Regulations have also been promulgated in the interests of the general public.

The purpose of this handbook is to place the federal regulations governing asbestos with background information in one convenient reference work. The handbook, prepared with the assistance of The Government Research Corporation, is designed to permit additions and changes as they may occur. Such materials will be forwarded to holders of the handbook by the Association following official publication in the Federal Register.

The handbook is distributed at no cost to AIA/NA members. Copies for non-members and additional copies may be obtained from the Association at a cost of $5.25 each.

September 5, 1975

Robert H. Mereness
Executive Director
Asbestos Information Association/North America
1660 L Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036

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The OSHA standard:

1. Defines the term "asbestos" for the purpose of regulation;
2. Establishes permissible exposure levels for airborne concentrations of asbestos fibers;
3. Details the methods of compliance including various engineering controls and work practices;
4. Prescribes the use of personal protective equipment;
5. Establishes a method of measuring airborne concentrations of asbestos;
6. Directs monitoring of asbestos concentrations in the work environment;
7. Establishes regulations for warning signs and labels;
8. Establishes certain housekeeping rules;
9. Prescribes record keeping requirements; and
10. Establishes requirements for medical examinations.

The most controversial aspects of the OSHA asbestos standard have been the established exposure levels--five fibers (longer than five micrometers) per cc of air, effective until July 1, 1976, at which time the level would be reduced to two fibers per cc. Shortly after promulgation of the standard, the Industrial Union Department (IUD) of the AFL-CIO, along with other unions, filed suit (July 28, 1972) in the U.S. Court of Appeals challenging the OSHA asbestos standard. The suit asked the court to review the standard and, among other allegations, charged that OSHA failed to accept the recommendations of NIOSH and the Advisory Committee, both of which recommended an immediate exposure level of two fibers per cc.

In the spring of 1973, OSHA decided to rewrite parts of the asbestos standard. OSHA's justification for amending the original standard was that certain parts were not enforceable and others were ambiguous.

On April 15, 1974, a three-judge panel in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia issued its ruling on the IUD suit. The court, in effect, denied the IUD petition against the standard except in two areas where it ordered OSHA to:

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1. Review the 1976 implementation date for the two-fiber exposure level requirement. The court suggested that OSHA might require the two-fiber level in those sectors of the industry where it was already feasible to achieve; and
2. Provide a longer period for the retention of personal and environmental monitoring records. The standard as promulgated provided for a three-year retention period.

In the rule making process, proposed amendments to a standard must be published in the Federal Register for public comment and possible hearing before a revision may be promulgated. Any revision to the standard will be reproduced by AIA/NA for inclusion in this publication.

OSHA/ASBESTOS STANDARD

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration asbestos standard was published in the Federal Register, Vol. 37, pp 11318-11322, on June 7, 1972.

In summary, the standard:

1. Defines asbestos as chrysotile, amosite, crocidolite, tremolite, anthophyllite and actinolite, whose fibers are longer than five micrometers;
2. Establishes an eight-hour time-weighted average worker exposure level to airborne asbestos of five fibers (longer than five micrometers) per cc of air, effective July 7, 1972. Effective July 1, 1976, the regulation requires that the worker exposure level will not exceed two fibers per cc as the eight-hour time-weighted average. As a ceiling concentration, the regulation states that no employee shall be exposed at any time to asbestos concentrations in excess of 10 fibers per cc of air;
3. Requires various methods of compliance including:
   a. engineering methods and controls such as exhaust ventilation, and controls on hand and power tools;
   b. work practices including rules governing wet methods, handling of asbestos products, and spraying, demolition, or removal of asbestos materials;

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4. Requires the use of personal protective equipment--respirators and work shift rotation--in certain work situations. The regulations also specify the types of respirators to be used and under what conditions respirators and shift rotation are permitted. In addition, the regulations cover other types of personal protection including special clothing, change rooms, clothing lockers, laundering, and clothing disposal;
5. Establishes a method for measuring the airborne concentration of asbestos. Such measurement shall be determined by the membrane filter method at 400-450 X (magnification)(4 millimeter objective) with phase contrast illumination;
6. Requires monitoring of both the work environment and individual employees, including a requirement that employees or their representatives shall be given a reasonable opportunity to observe the monitoring and to have access to monitoring records;
7. Requires caution signs and labels including requirements for the posting of warning signs and sign specifications, and product labeling including label specifications;
8. Establishes certain housekeeping requirements including the cleaning of the workplace and asbestos waste disposal;
9. Establishes certain recordkeeping requirements governing individual and environmental monitoring exposure records, employee access to exposure records, and employee notification of exposure to asbestos; and
10. Requires medical examinations including preplacement, annual, and work termination examinations; and the maintenance of, and employee access to, medical records.

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