

OSHA compliance- Protects Workers from Mesothelioma

Asbestosis or Mesothelioma is a highly dangerous disease that causes cancerous growth in the lungs of the victims who are exposed to asbestos dust. Asbestos has some good properties, like hardness and heat resistance, which makes it very useful for automotive, insulation and construction industry. But at same time it is highly hazardous to human life because of its' fine fibrous strands, which can easily find their way into the human body, through nose and mouth. The fine dust settles into the lung cavity and slowly gives rise to lung cancer, known as Mesothelioma that has very high morality rates.

Exposure Classification

To fight this growing malaise, the Department of Labor enforces strict OSHA compliance norms, which regulate the workers who work in industries that use asbestos. OSHA classifies the exposure levels in four broad categories, depending upon the degree of exposure and they are:

- Class I- This is the most hazardous class of asbestos exposure and is meant for workers who work on removing insulations and asbestos that is sprayed on the surface.
- Class II- This is meant for workers who remove asbestos floor tiles and ceilings.
- Class III- Regulates repair and maintenance crew, who work with asbestos related products.
- Class IV- Regulates workers who clear asbestos waste and debris.

Safety Regulations:

OSHA has framed safety regulations to protect the workers from asbestos exposure. The aim is to reduce or eliminate the health hazards that asbestos inhalation poses to human life. Some important rules that need to be followed to achieve the OSHA compliance in asbestos protection, are mentioned below:

- The permissible asbestos exposure limit should not be more than 0.1 air-borne asbestos fiber per cubic centimeter, in an 8- hour shift.
- Protective clothing and mask should be provided to workers to protect them from lethal effects of asbestos exposure. OSHA approved High Efficiency Particulate AIR (HEPA) filter should be used because it can trap 99.97 percent of particles of 0.3 micrometer diameter particle.
- Vacuum should be used to clean up the asbestos dust and use of compressed air is prohibited.
- A licensed contractor should be hired to clean up the asbestos contaminated areas because this will reduce risk of contamination, considerably.
- The employer should educate the workers on the risks of exposure and train them on how to work in a safe and secure manner.
- Contaminated areas should be clearly marked with warning signs so that workers are aware of the danger zones in the facility.

- Special decontamination areas in the facility should be set up so that workers can safely remove the contaminated clothing and safety gears without inhaling the dust.
- The contaminated belongings of the workers should be safely disposed off in a safe container, marked with asbestos hazard warning.
- Thorough medical examination of the workers is necessary and all the records should be kept by the employer for thirty years as Mesothelioma take many years to show its symptoms in the victims.

The objective of the OSHA is to create awareness about Asbestosis and train workers, and employers to adopt safety standards that minimize or eliminate exposure to this disease. Proper OSHA compliance ensures protection from exposure to the carcinogenic asbestos fiber.

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