

Government notices on workplace safety

Here's SCA's digest of key notices that appeared recently in the Federal Register (FR) or on OSHA's Web Site concerning workplace safety issues. Contacts, dates of publication and page numbers are included for your quick reference.

Consensus Standards

Just as you update your safety program, OSHA is clearing some cobwebs from its standards.

OSHA is revoking references to outdated industry and national consensus standards involving:

- guarding of portable power tools
- sawmills
- flammable and combustible liquids
- arc welding and cutting, and
- temporary labor camps

Almost a year ago, OSHA said it would update standards that reference or include language taken directly from outdated consensus standards.

Info: *FR*, 9/13/05, p.53, 295

Paperwork

OSHA has asked for comments on paperwork requirements for its Hazard Communications Standard.

The request is part of the usual opportunity for industry to comment on records requirements as part of the Paperwork Reduction Act.

Comments are due Oct. 31.

Info: *FR*, 9/1/05, p. 52, 134.

Needlesticks

Facilities that work with sharps won't have any new needlestick rules to abide by - at least for now.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has withdrawn an advance notice of proposed rulemaking concerning devices with needles.

The agency said its own and OSHA's recent actions regarding needlesticks are addressing the issue adequately for now.

The FDA issued the proposal in 2002 in response to a petition filed by Public Citizen's Health Research Group and the Service Employees International Union.

The groups wanted FDA to ban certain types of devices with needles that didn't meet the criteria in the agency's April 1992 safety alert.

FDA says it'll keep working with groups to determine whether one or more standards on needlesticks can be developed. FDA has cleared several hundred devices with needlestick prevention features.

Info: snipurl.com/needlestick

Mines

MSHA wants mines to significantly cut employees' exposure to diesel particulate matter – but at least the cuts are phased in over time.

A proposed rule would phase in a lower final permissible exposure limit (PEL) of 160 micrograms of total carbon over a five-year-period.

The current limit is 308 micrograms of elemental carbon.

A separate rule would convert the final PEL to an equivalent measure of elemental carbon.

MSHA is accepting comments on the proposal until Oct. 14.

Info: *FR*, 9/7/05, p. 53,279.

Vehicle Safety

What can companies expect next from the Federal; Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) now that it has completed years worth of work on hours of service rules for commercial drivers (SCA, 9/15/05, p.6)?

FMCSA gave a hint during its announcement of the final hours rule.

The issue of Electronic On-board Recorders (EOBRs) was tied to hours of service. But the agency didn't include them in the rule.

FMCSA says it expects to publish a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking on EOVRs in early 2006.

The agency is still analyzing data on the costs and benefits. One issue on the table: technical specifications if the government decides to require EOBRs in commercial vehicles.

Info: www.fmcsa.dot.gov/rules-regulation/topics/hos/HOS-2005.htm