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WORKPLACE POLICY ON HAZARDS TO REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

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Development of company policies regarding workplace hazards to reproductive health requires an interdisciplinary approach, ideally with input from epidemiologists, toxicologists, occupational health physicians, industrial hygiene specialists, engineers, and human resources personnel. It is in the implementation of company policies in the workplace that many conflicts and complications may arise. Rights to be free of discrimination in the workplace may conflict with the right to be free of hazards to reproduction in the workplace for a given individual. Scientific knowledge of the risks to human reproduction of chemical, biological, and physical agents are often unknown or poorly understood. If data exist on risks to reproduction of any given agent, such data may be available for only one gender. Thus, such policies may of necessity be developed with incomplete and imperfect information. These policies are also influenced by economic demands and legal issues, making the development and implementation of such policies a complex task.

Paul et al.¹⁷ made one of the few standardized attempts to describe workplace policies on reproductive hazards in the workplace. In a survey of 198 chemical and electronics manufacturing companies in Massachusetts, company representatives were asked for information on the following 3 areas: (1) company awareness of any reproductive hazards in the workplace; (2) health and safety education available to workers; and (3) existence of policies for job transfer or