

WORK-RELATED CANCERS

WHAT IS THE PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUE?

- Statistics show that more than 20,000 cancer related deaths occur yearly in the United States due to occupational exposure to carcinogenic substances, chemicals, and sources of ionizing radiation.
- Millions of U.S. workers are exposed to substances that have been shown to be carcinogenic in animal studies.

WHAT HAS CDC ACCOMPLISHED?

CDC conducts and funds research and public health activities to prevent and reduce the incidence of work-associated cancers. Accomplishments include

- The publication of studies and risk assessments leading to widespread recognition of the hazards of arsenic, asbestos, benzene, beryllium, cadmium, chromium diesel fumes, ethylene oxide, nickel, radon, silica, sulfuric acid, and vinyl chloride.
- Establishing scientific basis and protection strategies, which are used in accordance with the U.S. occupational health standards to control workplace exposures.
- Developed the scientific basis for compensating U.S. uranium miners under the *Radiation Exposure Compensation Act*.
- Participated in the nomination and review process for adding to the National Toxicology Program's 11th Report on Carcinogens (2003) 14 substances or exposures occurring in the workplace that are classified as "known" or "reasonably anticipated" to be human carcinogens.

WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

- CDC research programs are focused on issues of current public health concern (e.g., occupational causes of breast cancer among women, the biological mechanisms underlying occupational cancer).
- In partnership with other agencies in the National Toxicology Program, CDC researchers will continue to evaluate the scientific evidence for identifying carcinogens and develop priorities for testing potential occupational carcinogens. Specifically, testing of complex mixtures or exposures in the workplace is a priority; abrasive blasting materials, welding fumes, and metal working fluids are being targeted for such testing.
- CDC will collaborate with the National Cancer Institute and other organizations to develop improved occupational cancer research methods by using advances in the field of genetics and integrating human, animal, and mechanistic cancer research findings.
- CDC will initiate a new National Exposures at Work Survey, which will provide data on current workplace exposures to potential carcinogens.