

U.S. Department of Labor

Occupational Safety and Health Administration
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CENTER FOR DISEASE CONTROL
NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH
ROBERT A. TAFT LABORATORIES
4676 COLUMBIA PARKWAY
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ATTN: MS DIANE MANNING (NIOSH Mail Stop C-15)

In response to your request for information on the contamination of workers' homes by hazardous materials, the Austin Area Office has reviewed the information and is submitting the following response.

Question 1: Our office investigated one referral from the Texas Health Department concerning a child with high levels of lead. The father was also tested by the Health Department and found to have high lead levels. Our office investigated the father's place of employment and sampling found that lead levels in the workplace exceeded the permissible exposure level. The company received citations as a result of this investigation. Although the issue of the family's exposure was not directly addressed, it was found that the mode of transmission to the home was through the employee's clothing. The employer was required to install showers and change rooms.

Question 2: The Austin Area Office has not taken any measurements in an employee's home. Nor have they conducted any inspections in living quarters attached to farms.

Question 3: The Austin Area Office has not cited an employer for the transportation of hazardous materials from the workplace to the employee's home.

Question 4: There are specific OSHA standards that require measures to minimize the exposure potential of hazardous materials. These include the lead standard, asbestos standard, bloodborne pathogens standard, to name a few. These standards require preventive measures to limit the exposure by requiring change rooms, showers, specific control of contaminated clothing, etc.. Although these regulations are meant to control the exposure to other members of the employer's workforce, they indirectly effect the employee's family members since the exposed employee does not take his contaminated clothing home. We do not have an effective method of measuring all employers who are utilizing these methods.

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Question 5: The above mentioned measures involving showers, change rooms, prescribed means of handling contaminated clothing are all effective industrial hygiene practices which work to minimize workplace exposure and contamination of the employee's home.

Question 6: The Austin Area Office is not able to respond on the effectiveness of cleaning and laundering in removing hazardous materials.

Question 7: The Austin Area Office is not able to respond on the question of Indoor Air Quality research that pertains to the transfer of hazardous materials. The OSHA standards set threshold levels of airborne concentrations of hazardous materials. However the purpose of these levels is to reduce the employee's exposure. We are unaware of any research that might address the contamination of an employee's clothing at lower exposure levels than OSHA's standards and the transportation of that contaminant into the home environment.

Question 8: The Austin Area Office has no information on the above questions that pertains specifically to firefighters.

OSHA does have a Hazard Communication Standard (29 CFR 1910.1200) which has a training requirement to inform employees of the hazards of the materials to which they have a potential exposure. This standard could be effectively used to warn employees of the potential of transporting their workplace hazards home with them. We hope that this response will be of some assistance to you.



NICKIE L. NICHOLAS
Area Director

JAG/cm