



Occupational Safety & Health Administration We Can Help

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OSHA Trade News Release

U.S. Department of Labor
OSHA, Office of Communications

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OSHA announces new National Emphasis Program for occupational exposure to isocyanates

WASHINGTON – The Occupational Safety and Health Administration today announced a new National Emphasis Program to protect workers from the serious health effects from occupational exposure to isocyanates. OSHA develops national emphasis programs to focus outreach efforts and inspections on specific hazards in an industry for a three-year period. Through this NEP, OSHA will focus on workplaces in general, construction and maritime industries that use isocyanate compounds in an effort to reduce occupational illnesses and deaths.

"Workers exposed to isocyanates can suffer debilitating health problems for months or even years after exposure," said Assistant Secretary of Labor for Occupational Safety and Health Dr. David Michaels. "Through this program, OSHA will strengthen protections for workers exposed to isocyanates."

Isocyanates are chemicals that can cause occupational asthma, irritation of the skin, eyes, nose and throat, and cancer. Deaths have occurred due to both asthma and hypersensitivity pneumonitis from isocyanates exposure. Respiratory illnesses also can be caused by isocyanates exposure to the skin. Isocyanates are used in materials including paints, varnishes, auto body repair, and building insulation. Jobs that involve exposure to isocyanates include spray-on polyurethane manufacturing, products such as mattresses and car seats and protective coatings for truck beds, boats, and decks.

OSHA's Web page on Isocyanates provides additional information on recognizing potential hazards, as well as OSHA standards that address isocyanates in the general, construction and maritime industries.

Under the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970, employers are responsible for providing safe and healthful workplaces for their employees. OSHA's role is to ensure these conditions for America's working men and women by setting and enforcing standards, and providing training, education and assistance. For more information, visit <http://www.osha.gov>.

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