Hazardous Substances – **General**

08.01.05

Health surveillance requirements >

This is one of a series of information bulletins which have been written to assist the employer to manage risks associated with hazardous substances.

Health surveillance

Health Surveillance is the monitoring of workers' health to identify health effects from exposure to a hazardous substance. Health surveillance includes biological monitoring which is the measurement of the level of exposure to a hazardous substance in the body.

Employer's duty to provide health surveillance

The *Workplace Health and Safety Regulations* requires employers to assess the health risks to workers who could be exposed to hazardous substances. The need for health surveillance should be determined during the assessment process.

Regulation 69A of the Regulations requires that health surveillance must be carried out if -

- the assessment identifies there is significant risk to health, and if employees are exposed to any of the following hazardous substances; MOCA asbestos, crystalline silica, vinyl chloride, organophosphate pesticides, lead, isocyanates, etc; or
- the assessment has identified that a worker could be exposed to a hazardous substances, and that there;
- is a disease or health effect that can be caused by that exposure;
- is a reasonable likelihood that the disease or health effect could occur under the conditions of work; and
- are valid ways of detecting the disease or health effect; or
- there is a valid biological monitoring procedure available and a reasonable likelihood that levels that could be hazardous to health could be exceeded.

Performing health surveillance

Health surveillance must be performed under the supervision of a registered medical practitioner who is adequately trained in the tests or procedures necessary. However, an occupational health nurse or other suitably qualified person may carry out the health surveillance itself.

The employer must consult with workers before selecting the medical practitioner to supervise the health surveillance. Health surveillance is paid for by the employer.

The results

If a disease, health effect, or unsafe level of exposure to a hazardous substance is identified in health surveillance, the medical practitioner must advise the employer of the need for action to adequately control exposure to the substance. Refer to NT WorkSafe information bulletin 08.01.09 Hazardous Substances – Exposure Control, for assistance when considering control options.

In addition to advising the employer if action is needed to further control exposure, the medical practitioner must also advise the workers of the results of their own health surveillance and provide an explanation.

Health surveillance is not a substitute for providing and maintaining adequate control measures.

The records

Health surveillance records must be kept as a confidential record for 30 years.

The informed consent of an employee must be obtained before any personal/health information obtained as a result of health surveillance is provided to another person.

In general, health surveillance records should only be used on a confidential basis or 'in aggregate' where group records do not identify individual employees.

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