IS BENZENE STILL A GOOD INDICATOR OF RISK DURING CRUDE OIL SPILL CLEAN-UPS?

Historically, we have used airborne benzene concentrations during crude oil spills as an indicator of risks to cleanup workers. And, most results of benzene monitoring during crude oil spill cleanups have been below contemporary occupational exposure limits. However, starting with the 2002 wreck of the oil tanker Prestige off the coast of Galicia, Spain a series of epidemiology studies have started to show cleanup workers are experiencing some medical related issues. Zock, et al, who studied fishermen involved in the cleanup the Prestige spill multiple times. Respiratory issues persisted in the earlier studies but had merged into the background by their 6th year evaluation. More concerning is the 2013 study by D’Andrea, et al, of the cleanup workers associated with the 2010 catastrophic failure of the Deepwater Horizon well in the Gulf of Mexico. In their study of some 247 subjects [117 exposed & 130 not exposed] to crude oil and dispersants they found exposed workers, “experienced significantly altered blood profiles, liver enzymes and somatic symptoms”. Given that clean-up involve crude oil, which contains hundreds of individual chemicals, some of which possess toxic properties, and the dispersants, which also contain chemicals, it is obvious that the workers are being exposed to a “cocktail” of chemicals in addition to benzene. The questions then become, “Are airborne benzene concentrations a good indicator of worker risk and/or what chemicals should we be monitoring for instead of or in addition to benzene?”


ONLINE NOTIFICATION: ASBESTOS RENOVATION AND DEMOLITION

Beginning September 1, 2015 building owners, operators, and their authorized representative may use the state’s new Online Notification System for Asbestos Renovation and Demolition Projects. Prior to the new system individuals had to complete the form on paper and submit to the state via mail. As of September 1, individuals have the option to submit the form electronically by logging into your account at https://vo.ras.dshs.state.tx.us/datamart/login.do. By using this option you also have the ability to amend and even cancel a notification as well as pay your notification fees.

Of course the option to electronically apply and renew your state license has been around for years, this new Online Notification System should make this process more efficient and add some much needed features for life in the 21st century.

If you find your self involved in a renovation or demolition project, please give us a call (281-356-6038) and we can answer any questions you may have.

DID YOU KNOW? Caliche is now on Facebook. Search for us. Your feedback is important!

If you prefer to receive a copy of the newsletter by US Mail, please give us a call at the above number.
AVOID FLAME-RESISTANT CLOTHING MISHAPS

QUESTIONS: What are some common errors workers make regarding flame-resistant clothing?


ANSWER: When work correctly, flame-resistant clothing can provide lifesaving protection against a variety of workplace hazards, including arc flash, flash fires and molten metal spatter. However, if worn improperly, the clothing is not only out of compliance with industry standards, but it also becomes far less effective.

To help clarify some of the mistakes workers make in wearing FR clothing is improperly worn. This information will help you receive the full safety benefits of FR workwear and it may even save your life.

Top 5 ways FR clothing is improperly worn:

1. Wearing it with a non-FR outer layer:
   In bad weather, it may be tempting to wear a non-FR jacket over your regular FR clothing. Even if you are wearing flame-resistant clothing, a non-FR outer layer can still ignite and burn, putting you in danger. When faced with cold weather conditions, it is important to invest in the proper FR outerwear.

2. Wearing it with a non-FR synthetic under-layer:
   Performance T-shirts made from polyester or other synthetic material are often worn to help with moisture management, but they are not flame resistant and can actually melt to the skin. Ideally the under layer would be FR. This not only resolves the melting issue, but it also won’t ignite and continue to burn if accidentally exposed to the hazard.

3. Rolling up sleeves:
   Rolling up your sleeves may seem like the perfect way to beat the heat; however, this leaves the arms exposed and should be avoided. This is particularly important for arc flash exposures, as the arms will likely be closest to the event and therefore see the most thermal energy. Instead, look for FR clothing made with lightweight, moisture-wicking fabrics that provide a greater level of comfort without sacrificing safety.

4. Unzipping coveralls or unbuttoning shirts:
   Just like rolling up your sleeves, unzipping or unbuttoning FR clothing can expose the skin or (as noted above) a non-FR under layer that could ignite and burn. Again look for FR clothing made with lightweight, moisture-wicking fabrics that provide a greater level of comfort without sacrificing safety.

5. Not tucking in the shirttail:
   If the tail of your shirt is not properly tucked in, heat and flames can travel under the bottom of it and cause greater injury. Invest in FR clothing that’s purposely constructed with long shirttails to prevent this from happening.

So, to make sure your FR clothing is in compliance and ready to keep you safe, remember: Wear FR outerwear, avoid synthetic under layers, and roll it down. zip it up and tuck it in.

Asbestos Trivia Tidbit—DID YOU KNOW?

The Wizard of Oz or The Wizard of lethal Asbestos Exposure?

Asbestos in fake snow:

The movie “The Wizard of Oz”, contained a lethal asbestos exposure scene where snow made from 100% industrial grade chrysotile asbestos fell on Dorothy, the scarecrow and the cowardly lion in the poppy field scene, despite the fact that the health hazards of asbestos had been known for several years. Chrysotile, or “white” asbestos, visually resembles real snow.