

# Alaska Chapter NECA

September 25, 2006

Alaska Chapter, NECA [www.alaskaneca.org](http://www.alaskaneca.org)

## Chapter Calendar

<b>October 1</b>	<b>Steve's 11th Anniversary with NECA</b>
<b>October 3</b>	<b>Anchorage JATC</b>
<b>October 7-10</b>	<b>NECA Convention in Boston</b> 
<b>October 10</b>	<b>Safety Committee</b>
<b>October 11</b>	<b>Board Meeting / Membership Meeting Cancelled</b>

## Tool Box Talks

<b>October 02, 2006</b>	<b>Shock Hazards</b>
<b>October 09, 2006</b>	<b>Silica Dust</b>
<b>October 16, 2006</b>	<b>Slipping / Tripping Hazards</b>
<b>October 23, 2006</b>	<b>Testing: Pre-Op and Startup</b>
<b>October 30, 2006</b>	<b>The Safety Attitude</b>



## Asbestos: Understand the hazards

Asbestos was once a widely used building material. However, the dangers of asbestos are now well known and very few asbestos-containing products are currently being installed. Consequently, most worker exposures occur during the removal of asbestos and the renovation and maintenance of buildings and structures containing asbestos.

It's important that you are aware of and understand the hazards associated with asbestos to protect your health if it's possible that you could be exposed.

### What is asbestos?

The term asbestos describes six naturally occurring fibrous minerals found in certain types of rock formations. Asbestos became a popular commercial product because it is strong, won't burn, resists corrosion, and insulates well. In the United States, its commercial use began in the early 1900's and peaked in the period from World War II into the 1970's.

When mined and processed, asbestos is typically separated into very thin fibers, and these fibers can create serious health problems. If inhaled, they can cause diseases, which disrupt the normal functioning of the lungs. Intact and undisturbed, asbestos materials do not pose a health risk; however, asbestos materials can become hazardous when, due to damage, disturbance, or deterioration over time, they release fibers into the air.

### How can it hurt me?

Asbestos enters the body when you breathe in the fibers, or when fibers are inhaled while smoking. Asbestos can also be ingested by eating food in areas containing asbestos fibers. Once asbestos has embedded itself into your body, it cannot be removed.

The long-term effects associated with asbestos include:

- Asbestosis (an emphysema-like condition).
- Lung cancer.
- Mesothelioma (a cancerous tumor that spreads rapidly in the cells of membranes covering the lungs and body organs).
- Gastrointestinal cancer.

The symptoms of these diseases generally do not appear for 20 or more years after initial exposure.

### **What are asbestos symptoms?**

Symptoms of asbestos exposure include the following:

- **Acute** (short term) – shortness of breath, chest or abdominal pain, or irritation of the skin and mucous membranes.
- **Chronic** (long term) – breathing difficulty, dry cough, broadening and thickening of the ends of the fingers, bluish discoloration of the skin and mucous membranes, asbestosis, lung cancer and/or mesothelioma.

Smoking is known to make asbestos-related symptoms worse.

### **What must you do?**

When exposed to asbestos, you are required to:

- Follow company rules when working in asbestos exposure areas.
- Use any personal protective equipment which the company offers.
- Follow all rules regarding hygiene before taking breaks or after your work shift.
- Follow all company rules on where to change clothes before and after work.
- Know what to do with personal protective equipment (PPE) following completion of the job or work shift.
- Understand how to clean, test, use, and maintain your PPE.

## **Cleaning up after an injury**

Many first responders are tasked with responding to first aid and medical emergencies. However, if you don't protect yourself, you risk exposing yourself to harmful and sometimes deadly pathogens found in blood or other bodily fluids. Because of this risk, if part of your job is cleaning up after injuries in the workplace, you may need special training.



### **Minor injuries**

Minor injuries with small amounts of blood or body fluids in the work area can be cleaned up by the injured worker. Small cleanup kits in the immediate work area minimize the risk of contaminating other workers. These kits can be very small and basic, containing a pair of latex gloves, adhesive bandages, and disinfectant towelettes.

### **Major injuries**

When major injuries occur, the injured worker is unlikely to be in any condition to clean up after himself. When you or other workers are required to clean up blood and/or body fluids in the work area, follow these procedures:

1. Worry about the cleanup only after the worker has been safely removed from the area and the equipment or machine has been shut down. Remember to gather any body parts and transport them with the patient. Many amputated parts can be reattached by surgeons.
2. Put on the appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE). This may range from simple latex gloves for minor cleanups to full paper coveralls, heavy duty rubber gloves, shoe covers, and face shields for cleaning up an area after an incident involving blood or body fluids.
3. Apply disinfectant solutions liberally to the area, making sure that all contaminated equipment is decontaminated.
4. Use disinfectant-soaked rags to cleanup the blood/body fluids.
5. Dispose of contaminated PPE and cleanup materials in a properly marked biohazard bag or container.

Contact your health and safety department at your company for proper disposal rules.

Contaminated materials cannot just be thrown in the trash. Many states have different rules about how to dispose of bloodborne pathogen contaminated wastes. The health and safety department will know the rules for your state and be able to dispose of the waste properly.

Rendering first aid is a life-giving thing to do, and trying to help is a natural human response, but you must protect yourself by following the first aid and bloodborne pathogens program your company has set up.



## Wearing a hard hat makes sense

If you get knocked in the head when you forget to wear a hard hat, you might not get a second chance. Head injuries are often very serious.

### Know when to wear a hard hat

Head protection needs to be worn where there is a potential for head injuries from falling objects and when workers are near exposed electrical conductors that could contact the head.

### Match the hard hat to the hazards

Be sure you wear a hard hat that's rated for the job's hazards, especially if you need protection from electrical voltage. All head protection must comply with test standards set by the American National Standard Institute (ANSI).

Hard hats manufactured to meet ANSI Z89.1-1997 and the later 2003 revision come in two Types:

- Type 1 hard hats are intended to reduce the force of impact resulting from a blow only to the top of the head, or
- Type 2 hard hats are intended to reduce the force of impact resulting from a blow which may be received off center or to the top of the head.

Hard hats also have Class ratings for protection against electrical shock hazards:

- **Class G** (General) hard hats provide low voltage protection (they are tested to withstand 2,200 volts),
- **Class E** (Electrical) hard hats provide high voltage protection (they are tested to withstand 20,000 volts), or
- **Class C** (Conductive) hard hats provide no voltage protection.

Check the hard hat for approval markings inside of the shell:

- The manufacturer's name,
- ANSI Z89.1,

- The Type, and
- The Class.

### **Get a good fit**

Adjust the straps that make up the suspension system to get a good fit. There should be clearance space between the shell and the headband. Only wear the hard hat as it was designed to be worn.

Dirt can hide damage, so keep your hard hat clean. Inspect the shell and suspension system each time you wear it. Look for dents, cracks, chalking, or other signs of damage. If a hard hat takes a severe impact, replace it.

## **Hazardous atmospheres on the jobsite**

Construction jobsites are full of places where the air can be considered hazardous. Confined spaces and excavations immediately come to mind. Plus, areas where welding, painting, and concrete cutting is being done also qualify.

Hazardous atmospheres are capable of causing injury, illness, and death. They can be explosive, flammable, poisonous, corrosive, oxidizing, irritating, oxygen deficient, and toxic.



### **What does OSHA say?**

OSHA defines a hazardous atmosphere as:

- Air containing less than 19.5 percent oxygen and air containing more than 23.5 percent oxygen.
- A concentration of a flammable gas in excess of 20 percent of the lower flammable limit of the gas.
- Any other toxic hazardous air.

### **Testing the air**

One place you want to be very careful before you enter is a confined space. Before you enter the space, the air must be tested with a calibrated direct-reading instrument for:

- Oxygen content.
- Flammable gases and vapors.
- Potential toxic air contaminants.

You must test all levels of the air in the confined space. Why? All gases and vapors are different and find their own level in the air. If testing reveals that the air is unsafe, you have to deal with the hazardous atmosphere by using ventilation or respiratory protection.

### **Ventilation**

Ventilation is the best method for making a hazardous atmosphere safe. Planning the operation and selecting the proper ventilation equipment is critical. The atmosphere should be tested as often as necessary to make sure that the continuous forced air is preventing the buildup of a hazardous atmosphere.

### **Respiratory protection**

Respiratory protection is the alternative to ventilation. There are two things to be concerned about when testing the air:

- If the results show the existence of a hazardous atmosphere and additional ventilation can't reduce the concentrations to safe levels, or
- The tests show there isn't a hazardous atmosphere, but one can reasonably be expected to develop.

If either of these is present, then you must use respiratory protection. Also, respiratory protection must always be used during a rescue situation.



## **An alcohol awareness quiz**

How much do you know about alcohol? Try taking the following true/false quiz. You may be surprised at how much you already know.

### **1. Alcohol abuse and dependency are a major health problem in America.**

True. Alcohol abuse and dependency are one of the major health problems confronting America today. Alcohol knows no ethnic or income boundaries, it affects every group of people including newborn babies whose mothers drank during pregnancy. In addition, it

affects almost every part of your body, from your liver to your stomach, blood, kidneys, and colon.

**2. If it takes you more than 2 ounces of liquor to feel “buzzed,” you may have a problem with alcohol.**

True. This question relates to tolerance, or how much alcohol it takes you to feel drunk. Many studies indicate that if it takes you more than 2 ounces of liquor, you may be drinking too much.

**3. Alcohol is a stimulant.**

False. Alcohol is a depressant. Depressants slow the vital functions of the body, such as heart rate and blood pressure. Even though alcohol may seem to make you more talkative and outgoing, it slows your body and helps you feel relaxed or less inhibited. That is why it is so important not to drink and drive. Your reaction time is dramatically slowed when you drink. More than 75% of all car accidents are alcohol related.

**4. Elderly people can’t be alcoholics.**

False. Many elderly people have an undetected problem with alcohol. They drink in their homes, and no one may know how much they are drinking. If you are worried about an elderly person who you know, ask them about this. Let them know that you are concerned about their drinking.

**5. Teen alcohol abuse is a predictor for adult alcoholism.**

True. Teenagers who start drinking at a young age are at an increased risk to develop alcoholic problems. The best advice is to discourage teen drinking. Many teens drink due to peer pressure. Talk to your children directly about alcohol use. Remember to set an example. If you have a problem, it is likely that your children will also.

There are many resources available in every community to help with alcohol issues. Look in your local yellow pages or ask your healthcare provider to refer you to a professional counselor. All visits are kept confidential.

For more information about alcohol and drug abuse, visit the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism website at <http://www.niaaa.nih.gov>.