

WOHRC NEWS

WOMEN'S OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH RESOURCE CENTER

FOUNDATION FOR WORKER, VETERAN AND ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH INC.

Briefly Noted

Supreme Court Supports OSHA 'General Duty' Clause

The Supreme Court left intact the U.S. Court of Appeals in the District of Columbia decision that employers cannot avoid citations by complying with specific OSHA standards, if they know that workplace conditions are still hazardous.

The Court of Appeals had found that the OSHA Review Commission's dismissal of a citation against General Dynamics for a fatality following a freon exposure. The company had contested the citation because it claimed to be in compliance with a specific standard. The Court found the general duty clause wherein an employer must provide a workplace "free from recognized hazards that are causing or are likely to cause death or serious physical harm" to workers supersedes specific standards.

If an employer knows that a hazard exists even when complying with a standard, the employer must still seek to abate the hazard.

The case had been brought by the United Auto Workers and the Secretary of Labor.

Lab Worker Tests AIDS Positive; Low Overall Risk Still Prevails

A second laboratory worker whose job entailed handling of concentrated AIDS virus for research purposes has been found to test positive for AIDS according to a report in *Science*. The case was one among 256 laboratory and affiliated workers who participated in a well-controlled nationwide study of lab workers. Sophisticated genetic tests confirmed that the source of the worker's AIDS exposure was the laboratory.

(continued on page 8)

New OSHA Formaldehyde Standard; 7 Yr Battle Ends; Unions Still Unhappy

A new formaldehyde exposure standard which reduces permissible workplace levels to 1 part per million (ppm) from the current 3 ppm is scheduled to go into effect at the end of January 1988. A short term exposure limit (STEL) of 2 ppm was also set. Workplaces that exceed an 'action level' of 0.5 ppm over an 8 hour day will be required to comply with the monitoring, employee training and medical surveillance parts of the standard.

OSHA had been under threat of a contempt of court citation from the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia, following a seven year battle waged by 14 unions and the American Public Health Association to obtain a more stringent standard. Since the late 1970's evidence has been mounting that formaldehyde is a human and animal carcinogen.

According to the *AFL-CIO News* 'organized labor can only declare a partial victory' and litigation is expected to continue. Clothing & Textile Workers Union President Jack Sheinkman has stated that the new standard "will not even require employers to notify workers of the cancer risk, nor provide minimal medical screening for the skin problems or allergies which commonly afflict workers handling permanent-press fabrics treated with formaldehyde."

Where Workers Are Exposed to Formaldehyde

More than 2 million workers are believed to be exposed to formaldehyde. The jobs marked with an * have many women workers:

highest exposures: (about 400,000 workers in industries currently above 1 ppm) furniture makers, foundries, laboratories* (pathology, anatomy, histology), funeral services*, hardwood plywood, particle board and fiberboard manufacturers

middle range exposures: (about 1 million workers in industries from 0.1 to 1 ppm) apparel manufacturers*, plastic molding makers, textile finishing*, formaldehyde production

lowest range exposures: (about 675,000 workers in industries from 0.1 to 0.5 ppm) paper and paperboard mills; photofinishing labs*, corrugated and solid fiber boxes, some electrical equipment makers*, hemodialysis*, softwood plywood, biology instructors*

The Toxic Effects of Formaldehyde

Formaldehyde is an extremely reactive compound. Even at very low levels of 0.1 ppm it can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat. As the concentration increases, so does the irritation. Levels as low as 100 ppm it is immediately dangerous to life. Formaldehyde is a potent allergen, causing severe skin and lung allergies. Workers may not develop the allergies for some years and then find that they must abandon their jobs because they cannot tolerate even minimal contact with the chemical. Several recent studies have found that formaldehyde can cause human and animal cancer, including cancer of the nasal passages (nasopharyngeal).

General Provisions of Revised Standard

In addition to lowering the exposure limit, any workplace with average levels over 0.5 ppm must have a workplace monitoring and worker training program and establish emergency procedures. Required are a medical surveillance and recordkeeping program, and establishment of regulated areas in which formaldehyde is to be used. Primary reliance is on engineering and work practice control, but if personal protection is needed the employer is to provide maintenance and selection.

(See page 8 for ordering a WOHRC Formaldehyde Information Pack)

OTA Study Explores Electronic Monitoring of Workers

Study Finds "New Technology, New Tensions"

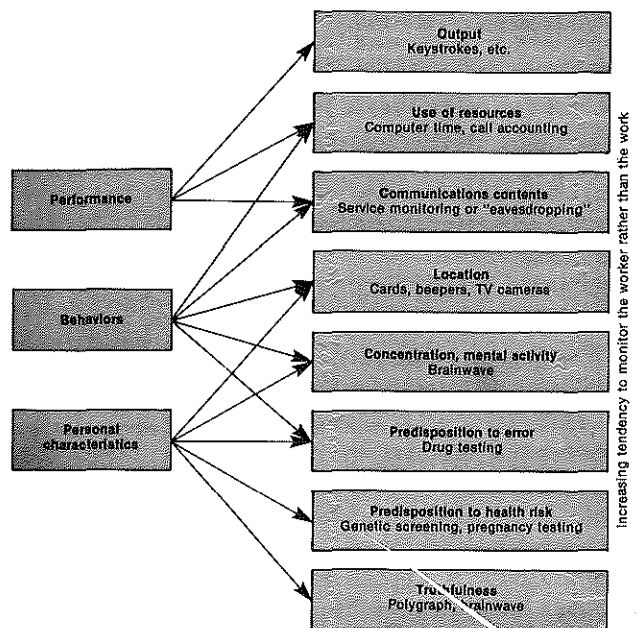
Equipped with modern computers and electronic telephones, employers can now keep precise track of employee performance. They can monitor keystrokes per second, typing errors and rates at which orders or sales are processed. Supervisors can listen in on workers, such as order clerks, with phone-based jobs without either the worker or customer knowing. Does this new level of control and supervision affect worker well-being and the quality of working life? Is electronic monitoring an infringement of civil liberties? These some of the issues addressed by a recent U.S. Congress' Office of Technology Assessment (OTA) study.

The report, *The Electronic Supervisor: New Technology, New Tensions*, presents six major findings on the current use of electronic monitoring and its implications.

Summary of OTA's Major Findings

Finding #1: The information gathered from electronic monitoring is useful to managers for managing resources, planning workloads and reducing costs. However, when applied to individual employees, the intensity and continuousness of the monitoring by computer, as opposed to human supervision, 'raises questions about privacy, fairness and

Figure 1.—Some Categories of Behavior Subject To Monitoring, Measurement, or Testing



SOURCE: Office of Technology Assessment, 1987.

Finding #2: Computerization entails organizing work in new ways and the ability to monitor electronically. Both monitoring and computerization are most likely to meet employee resistance when they are imposed without worker participation in the changes. Worker involvement in design and implementation of monitoring programs can result in greater worker acceptance. Despite some labor-management cooperation and union activities, most firms do not have mechanisms for employee participation. This is in contrast to most other industrialized countries which require worker participation.

Finding #3: There is reason to believe that electronically monitoring the quantity or speed of work contributes to stress and stress-related illness, although there is still little research separating the effects of monitoring from other job stresses.

Finding #4: Listening in or recording worker conversations with customers helps assure quality and provides liability protection. However, the privacy of customers, and workers may be violated. Monitoring electronic mail messages and personal computer diskettes raises questions of personal privacy. No laws or standards currently exist for determining whether workers have any privacy rights on the job.

Finding #5: Keeping account of employee telephone usage (time, duration, destination and costs) is a powerful management tool but it also raises privacy questions. Other cost control methods can be used to limit non-business use of telephones. OTA cites fears that call records could be used to identify or harass whistleblowers, union organizers or other dissidents within a firm or agency.

Finding #6: Electronic monitoring is only one of a range of technologies used in today's workplace to gather information about the work process or to predict work quality based on personal characteristics of workers. Some of the other methods are shown in the accompanying figure.

Policy Framework Needed

The OTA report points to the need for policy development in the area of the workplace and new electronic monitoring. Currently there are no laws requiring that a job be "fair" or well designed or that employees need be consulted about work standards. As computerization continues to grow, the need for such policies will also grow.

(The OTA document (#:052-003-01082-8) can be obtained from the U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington DC 20402 for \$6.50.)

WOMEN'S OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH RESOURCE CENTER

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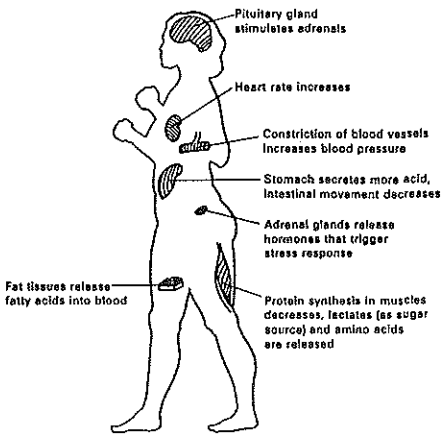
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Science News Clips

Enduring Biochemical Changes from Stress?



The Body's Stress Response

From Stellman & Henifin, "Office Work Can be Dangerous to Your Health" (Pantheon 1983), with permission

The pioneering stress studies by Hans Selye in the 1950's lead to the commonly accepted model that physical and psychological demands (stress) cause the sympathetic nervous system to respond. Aspects of the *stress response* are shown in the accompanying figure. Most people have assumed that after the stress demands have ended, the body returns to its unstressed biochemical state.

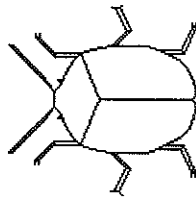
Now researchers who have been studying the actual chemical pathways in the nervous system that transmit the information and cause the *stress response* have discovered that stress may induce long-lasting biochemical changes. The primary biochemical pathway involved is the synthesis of chemicals called catecholamines. (Most people have heard of *adrenalin*, which they associate with spurts of energy needed for emergencies or strenuous activities. Adrenaline is another name for the catecholamine epinephrine, and is the final step in the stress pathway discussed here.)

Scientists at Cornell University Medical College have found that after repeated stress, the enzyme which is the rate controller in this pathway (it is called tyrosine hydroxylase, or TH), remains at an elevated level for longer periods than the stress itself has lasted. Under some experimental conditions,

TH levels remained elevated for at least 3 days after stress stimulation had ceased.

It is too soon to understand the long-range health implications of these findings, but now scientists have another tool for studying the effects of various stressors on the body. [*ed. note:* These findings may also be part the biochemical explanation for the relationship between stress and chronic health problems like heart disease and hypertension.]

(Black I, et al "Biochemistry of Information Storage in the Nervous System", *Science* 236, 1263-8, 1987).



Pesticide Persistence After Routine Extermination

Canadian governmental scientists have investigated how much of the insecticide *diazinon* remained in the environment of an animal laboratory facility after monthly spraying. The spraying was used to prevent insect infestation.

It was found that low levels of diazinon were present in the laboratory air at all times and that levels peaked immediately following spraying. After about one day, the diazinon levels returned to the 'background'. During the many months of spraying, the researchers found there to be little build-up in background levels.

The background levels averaged <0.5 micrograms/m³, which is considerably below the currently recommended ACGIH level of 100 micrograms/m³. Studies in college dormitories treated with the spray found similar low levels.

(Williams D, Shewchuck C, Lebel G, Muir N, "Diazinon Levels in Indoor Air After Periodic Application for Insect Control", *Am Ind Hyg Assoc J* (48), 780-785, 1987.)

More Evidence of Low AIDS Risk for Health Workers

A 9-12 month study of female health care workers at the UCLA Medical Center found no evidence that any of the workers had HIV infection.

The research team had followed 102 women with high exposures, 43 with low exposures and 101 with no exposures to AIDS patients. The team also studied other occupational infections in this group, since AIDS patients frequently are victims of other infectious diseases. Two of the women in the high exposure group tested positive for other infectious agents: one for Hepatitis B and one for herpes simplex virus type 2. The researchers report that neither of these cases could be directly linked to occupational causation.

The researchers stress that strict infection control procedures, as recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and other agencies, and as practiced at UCLA, appears to prevent spread of AIDS and also [*to a large extent, ed. note*] other occupational infections.

(Kuhls T et al "Occupational Risk of HIV, HBV and HSV-2 Infections in Health Care Personnel Caring for AIDS Patients", *AJPH* 77(10), 1306-1308, 1987)



Sperm Count

An 8-year reevaluation of 15 workers whose ability to produce sperm had been severely damaged (azospermic or oligospermic) by the pesticide DBCP. Only four men with reduced ability and 3 with no ability had recovered. These men had retained normal hormone levels throughout. No birth defects were observed [*ed note:* inconclusive is such a small group].

(Potashnik g and Yanai-Inbar I, "DBCP: An 8-year reevaluation of testicular function and reproductive performance", *Fertil Steril* 47 (2), 317-323, 1987.)

Science News Clips (cont'd)

Magnetic Fields and Workers

Advances in magnet technology and in superconductivity are daily expanding the numbers of workers and occupations with exposure to strong magnetic fields. In health care, machines like NMRs generate steady magnetic fields. Technical workers in many high energy physics laboratories and in manufacturing operations with high electrical energy, like electrolytic cells may also be exposed. Power lines generate magnetic fields.

How the Body Could Interact with Magnetic Fields

The Heart: Since blood is a flowing charged fluid, it generates a small magnetic field which can interact with an external magnetic field. Heart functioning could be affected as the magnetized blood flows through. Some preliminary evidence showing elevated blood pressure in exposed workers is available.

Membrane Function and Calcium Ion Flow: Flow of ions across cell membranes is basic to body function. Time-varying fields can alter the flow of calcium ions across cells. This may affect the nervous system and other bodily functions. Some experts feel that altering the membrane surface can also promote susceptibility to carcinogens. Experiments have shown increased effects of drugs like valium on animals concurrently exposed to magnetic fields.

Cancer: A growing number of studies, all published in reputable journals but highly controversial, have shown an increased incidence of leukemia and tumor rates in the vicinity of high power lines. Also, spark discharges in these fields have caused mutations in test systems.

Accidents: Metal objects, like hand tools, can become magnetized and set into motion by magnetic fields, becoming potentially lethal projectiles. Strict safety precautions are needed. Workers with implanted metals or electronic devices can be severely affected as well.

Two Types of Fields: Steady and Time-Varying

Magnetic fields can either be steady, such as those produced by superconductors and NMR equipment, or they can be time-varying such as the fields generated by alternating electric current. All electric fields are accompanied by a magnetic field so that any electric device, large or small, will generate a magnetic field. The smaller the device, the smaller the field. There is virtually no definitive data available on the health effects of the weaker electric fields but many people believe they can have some adverse effect on health.

The Lawrence Livermore National Laboratories and other facilities have developed guidelines for the use and control of magnetic fields since no required standards are in effect. The author states the difficulties inherent in standard setting since there is a "pressing need for further research," particularly in the light of "mutagenic and carcinogenic effects" that have been reported, and despite the universal presence of magnetic fields in consumer and occupational settings.

(Partially based on Miller G, "Exposure Guidelines for Magnetic Fields", *Am Ind Hyg J* 48(12), 957-968, 1987.)

Murder on the Job: Homicide A Leading Cause of Workplace Fatalities



Homicide on the job causes about 1,600 fatalities per year. Based on data from California and Maryland, most of the deaths are among victims of robberies. The highest risk occupations are police, security guards, taxi drivers,

service station and convenience store employees.

Murder at work is also the major cause of death in the State of Texas. Researchers studying the 348 cases of fatal occupational injuries that occurred between 1975 and 1984, found that homicides accounted for 53%, followed by 26% from motor-vehicle related injuries. Among the 133 deaths in retail sales workers, a full 77% were the result of homicides.

Effective Strategies for Prevention Urged

Both research groups and an editorial in the American Public Health Association's (APHA) journal called for the development of strict standards and preventive strategies to decrease this loss of life. OSHA, it was stated, has been inappropriately treating homicide as a criminal justice problem rather than a health and safety problem. Currently there are no OSHA standards. Some methods are relatively simple to accomplish. Placing cash registers in full view of the street and having well-publicized drop safes where cashiers place all bills greater than \$1, are two examples found to be effective in reducing robberies.

(Ref: Davis H, Honchar P, Suarez L, "Fatal Occupational Injuries of Women, Texas 1975-1984", *AJPH* 77(12) 1524-1527, 1987; Kraus JF, "Homicide While at Work: Persons, Industries, and Occupations at Risk", *AJPH* 77(10), 1285-1289, 1987; Dietz PE and Baker SP, "Editorial: Murder at Work", *AJPH* 77(10), 1273-1274, 1987.)

Poor Health from Poor Jobs

Evidence continues to mount that stressful, unsatisfying jobs are related to poor health in women workers. Using the extensive medical records from the Kaiser Permanente Health Center in the Pacific Northwest, researchers studied the effects of supportive families, job status and sex on the health of men and women. People who gain social support from work and occupational status had better health. For women, family roles and responsibilities interacted to have an effect on health.

(Hibbard J and Pope C, "Employment Characteristics and Health Status Among Men and Women," *Women and Health* 12(2), 85-102, 1987.)

Dial Painters and Occupational Physicians

A fascinating history of how medical researchers and physicians obstructed the discovery of the poisoning of the radium dial painters has been written by historian Claudia Clark. Singles reprints available from WOHR for \$4.00.

(Clark C "Physicians, Reformers and Occupational Disease: The Discovery of Radium Poisoning", *Women & Health* 12(2) 147-167, 1987.)

Designs for Health: A Better Fitting Chair

The human body requires movement. Static positions stress muscles and nerves. Sitting, standing, or lying in the same position for extended periods usually leads to pain, tenderness and possibly even permanent injury. For the many workers who spend long hours sitting each day, it can be quite a challenge to find a chair that "fits".

A well-fitting chair will provide support for the back, and also will allow its occupant to change sitting positions while seated. Most modern chairs do allow the sitter to adjust the height and depth of the seat and backrest, but even these adjustments may be insufficient for true ergonomic 'fit', particularly if the user fails to make the appropriate adjustments.

A "Serious" Chair

In 1984 a task seating chair, as office chairs are sometimes called, won designer awards and was even the subject of a traveling museum exhibition, entitled "A Serious Chair," that opened at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis.

The appearance of the chair, called "Equa" by its designers Bill Stumpf and Don Chadwick, is simple, and not very different from other office chairs, in the eyes of an ordinary observer. But both the engineering and

construction materials are innovative and responsive to biological needs of sitters.

One unique feature is the chair's shell, which is made out of polyurethane foam. But this is no ordinary polyurethane, as found in upholstery. Rather, it has been molded to provide sufficient support for the body, yet to also be able to 'flex' from side to side as you shift your weight.

Absorbing the Shock of Sitting

According to the designers Chadwick and Stumpf, several things happen when you sit down in a chair. As soon as you sit on a chair's seat pan, your body weight is loaded onto your

buttocks and then transferred to your spine. The shock, as your body makes contact with the chair's seat, can compress the discs between the vertebrae and result in strain in your lower back. The shell of the Equa chair is designed to absorb that shock.



Low Back Work Chair

Settling back in most chairs usually involves sliding forward in the seat and transferring the weight to the back of the chair. If this happens quickly, your entire body will experience a jolt. At the same time the seat pan lifts your thighs up, exerting pressure on them.

The dynamics of reclining in an Equa chair are different since the construction of the backrest and seat pan causes them to recline at different rates and angles, in order to distribute and support your weight throughout the process. The backrest angles back at the top and forward at the bottom and the seat pan moves down, assuring steady support for the lower back (lumbar) region.

Ergonomic Knee Tilting

The design of Equa chairs incorporates a knee-tilt mechanism which allows you to recline while keeping your feet on the floor. Most conventional tilt mechanisms are located near the center column of the base, so that the sitter must inevitably raise her legs when leaning back.



High Back Work Chair

Since Equa's tilt mechanism is located behind the knee, it is possible to shift your weight to the thighs, legs and back, while your feet remain flat on the floor in a more normal and health position, when leaning back in your chair.

The designers have also incorporated a 'dwell' mechanism, designed to keep a sitter upright in the chair until she begins to lean back.

A Chair Sitter's Bill of Rights

... to be able to sit in a position with knees and elbows bent at a 90-degree angle;
... to have adjustable seat height;

...to have a backrest which provides support for the lower back and a swivel seat which allows the sitter to use the backrest when turning;

...to have a seat which is not too long from front to back. A long chair seat can cause you to lean forward when working, thus placing unnecessary pressure on the lower back and thighs;

...to have a five-pronged safety base gives stability;

...to sit on materials which allow your body to breathe. (adapted from Stelman and Henfin, *Office Work Can Be Dangerous to Your Health* (Pantheon, 1983), p. 74.)

When you sit in an Equa chair, the seat pan moves down and the backrest moves out, expanding the seat pocket.

If you are lucky enough to have a job that allows you to really recline back in your chair from time to time during the day, the design of the Equa chair accommodates that motion as well. As you recline far back for brief periods of time, the top of the backrest flexes out, and the bottom of the backrest flexes in to provide contoured support for the lower back.

Sitting on a chair for long periods can cause excessive sweating, particularly if you are wearing layer upon layer of synthetics. The designers built the chair with a gap between the seat and back to allow air to circulate:

The Equa chair is manufactured by the Herman Müller Company. The Women's Occupational Health Resource Center does not endorse or promote the purchase of specific products. Rather, from time to time, WOHRC focusses on innovative products or processes.



Rocker Base Guest Chair



Resources Review

New Historical Resources:

Dying for Work: Worker's Safety and Health in the 20th Century

David Rosner and Gerald Markowitz, eds. (Indiana Univ Press, 1987, 234 pp, \$35)

Slaves of Depression: Workers' Letters About Life on the Job

Gerald Markowitz and David Rosner, eds. (Cornell Univ Press, 1987, 229 pp, \$9.95)

The Hawk's Nest Incident: America's Worst Industrial Accident

by Martin Cherniack (Yale Univ Press, 1986, 194 pp \$19.95)

When you spend most of your time working and thinking about occupational health, it's easy to feel overwhelmed by the problems and obstacles. But reading these three books reminds you just how much progress has been made in achieving more health, safety and human dignity on the job. There are, of course, still major hazards, thousands of deaths and hundreds of thousands of diseases which arise out of the workplace. And, as every issue of *WOHRC News* details, it is still a struggle to achieve improvements, it is impossible for the modern American, from any walk of life, even to comprehend the horrors of the depression and of early industrialization for the workers who created our modern society.

One basic lesson of these books is clear: workers' lives just weren't valued very much. In *The Hawk's Nest Incident*, Martin Cherniack describes, often in too painstaking detail, the callousness of a production process where speed clearly outweighed safety. When the Union Carbide Corporation needed to transport water from a river to a power plant, it bored through a silica mountain at an awesome speed, thereby intensifying worker exposures to the industrial killer, silica. Even as the worker deaths and illnesses became apparent, the engineers or supervisors were not daunted. The job was completed in record time - but at a cost of hundreds of lives.

This book is a bit dry, and the author clearly is straining at remaining 'impartial'. It's also not clear that people unfamiliar with Hawk's Nest will actually be able to comprehend the overall situation given all the minutiae provided, but, I guess it's important minutiae to have, and so it's good thing that Dr. Cherniack has compiled it all. This book isn't bedtime reading, but it would make an excellent text for an occupational health or epidemiology course and is good reading for the serious health and safety professional.

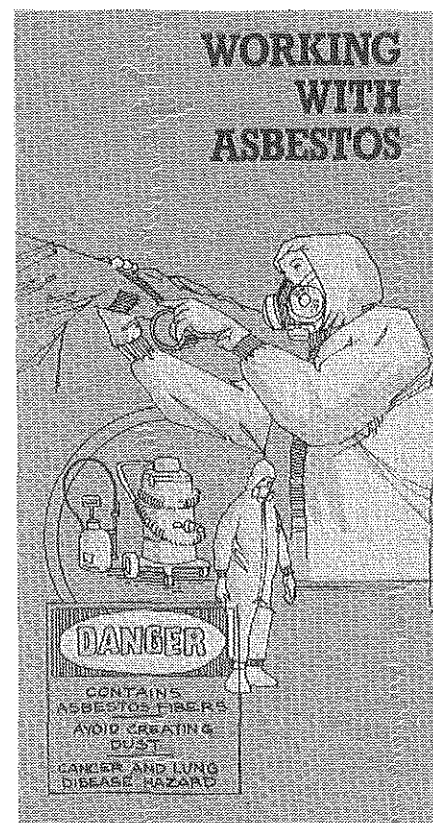
Union Carbide was, of course, not alone in its inhuman treatment of workers during those years, as the two works edited by Rosner and Markowitz clearly show. The remarkable collection of letters selected from the U.S. National Archives, and included in *Slaves of the Depression*, show how workers and their families suffered. We usually think of the Depression as a time of joblessness, these letters remind us how poorly so many of those with jobs also fared.

Horrid conditions were not limited to factories. Domestic workers, agricultural workers and others, black and white, male and female, wrote to the Roosevelts and others in the federal government about their plight and seeking their assistance. The book is well-laid out, the editors' comments illuminating. It is reasonably priced, so we have chosen to include it in WOHRC's latest Resources List.

The second book, *Dying for Work*, is a collection of essays by well-known authorities and activists in occupational health. These essays also provide a dramatic set of examples of how long hours of work, lack of sanitary conditions, the absence of workers' compensation and other social safeguards, contributed to the unspeakable conditions of those earlier years. The essays are clearly written from a left-of-center perspective, and the rhetoric in some of them may be a bit too strong for some WOHRC readers. Also, for those of us familiar with occupational health history, the 'tales' may be familiar ones. I was hoping that Rosner and Markowitz would

edited essays that uncovered more of the hidden history of occupational health -- they are so talented at doing that -- but the book is worth reading and much will be new to most readers. It's too bad it's so expensive. Maybe you can get a library to purchase it.

Reviewed by Jeanne Mager Stellman



"The key message about asbestos removal is : There are no shortcuts!"-- National Safety Council, 1987.

The National Safety Council has prepared a complete training program for the safe removal of asbestos, with two slide shows and the pamphlet *Working With Asbestos*. The program provides a step-by-step demonstration of how to use protective clothing and equipment in order to safely remove asbestos. This important resource is especially useful coming from the National Safety Council, a widely accepted source by both employees and employers.

For more information on these products call the National Safety Council's toll free order hotline: 800-621-7619 between 8:30 - 4:45 pm CST

Resources Review (cont'd)

The Physician Assistance Program: A Resource Kit on Physician Impairment

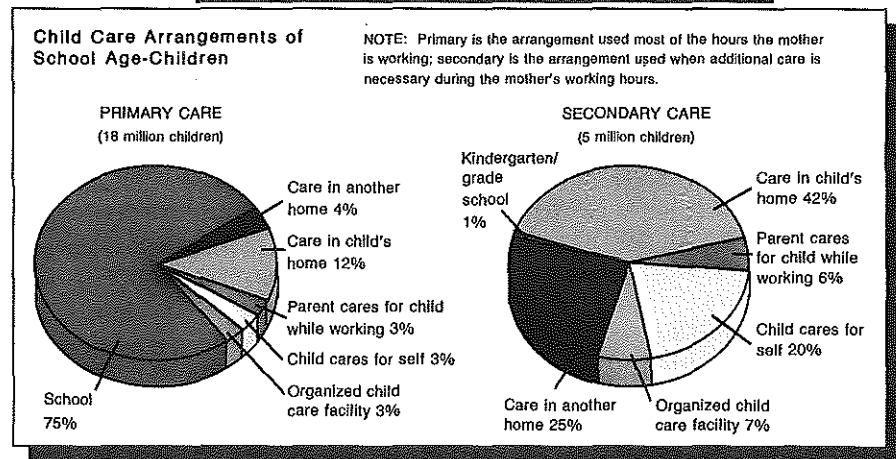
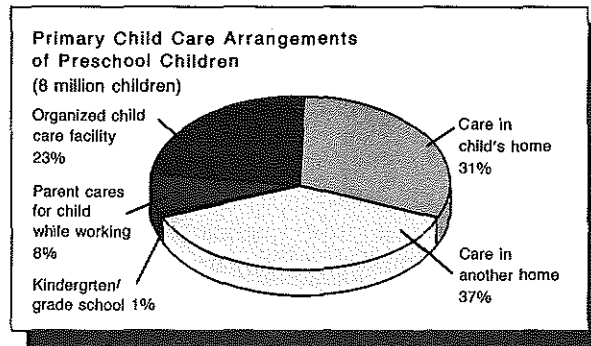
The American Medical Association has assembled and published a handsome resource kit of special interest to physicians, nurses, and their families. It is based on and contains the program of the national conference on Impaired Health Professionals. Separate components of the kit include the cornerstone 1972 JAMA reprint, *The Sick Physician: Impairment by Psychiatric Disorders, including Alcoholism and Drug Dependence*, a chronology of related AMA activities, lists of publications and audiovisual materials, treatment facilities, support groups, State Medical Society resources, an annotated bibliography, a primer on medical student impairment, a model "impaired physician treatment act," and an update on the AMA's physician mortality study. The kit can be ordered for \$20 from the AMA Department of Substance Abuse, 535 N. Dearborn St, Chicago, IL 60610.

Workers - Compensation Committees for Local Unions

Philadelphia attorney Joseph Lurie has written an excellent concise guide for trade unionists involved in workers' compensation cases. This hip-pocket booklet is clearly oriented toward workers. For example, it states that "More often than not, the company will try to 'take care of' the injured worker as cheaply as possible." The booklet provides a clear set of procedures, tables of common work-related diseases and injuries, health tests, and wage calculations. Although many of the specific requirements are based on Pennsylvania's regulations, Lurie's law firm (Galfand, Berger, Senesky, Lurie & March, Suite 1200, 1737 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia PA 19103) offers to inexpensively prepare similar booklets for other states.

Who's Minding the Kids ... And How?

The U.S. Bureau of the Census' Statistical Brief *Who's Minding the Kids?* on child care patterns in the U.S. is now available. Based on surveys made in early 1984, the evidence shows a continuing trend in the use of organized child care centers, while the majority of preschool-age children were still being taken care of in their own or someone else's home. The demand for child care is growing as more women with young children work.



Infectious Diseases in Child Day Care, Management and Prevention,

Michael T. Osterholm, Jerome O. Klein, Susan S. Aronson, and Larry K. Pickering, eds. Chicago: Univ of Chicago Press, 1987. \$30.

In light of the Census Bureau realities about the widespread use of child care, a long overdue interdisciplinary symposium was held in June 1984 to address the issue of infectious diseases in child care. Luckily for those interested in quality child care, they symposium addressed a wide-range of related issues.

Many of the articles originally appeared in the *Review of Infectious Diseases*, but now the University of Chicago Press has published this book and added a very useful index and nontechnical summaries of the scientific studies. The studies have been prepared within the context of working

parents' clear need for good child care. In article after article, the quality of the child care, particularly the staff-child ratio and the training and well-being of the day care workers themselves, are seen as key determinants in reducing the transmission of infectious disease in the day care setting.

Along with studies of each specific disease which can affect young children, several articles deal with social and governmental issues such as regulation and liability, the training of day care workers, problems of the day care home ("the silent majority" of child day care), the care and exclusion of ill children, and resources for child care providers.

This book should be in the library of every organizer and deliverer and concerned parent involved in child care, as well as those who work with and represent child care workers.

Briefly Noted (cont'd)

The overall findings of the study show an extremely low risk rate for lab workers. However, the infected worker did follow all standard safety precautions for avoiding lab infections and always wore gloves. There was no history of accidental injuries, raising the possibility of infection through skin contact. Another laboratory had been contaminated earlier after an accidental puncture wound.

The researchers emphasize that this lab worker's exposure was to highly concentrated experimental levels of the AIDS virus, not levels that would be encountered in normal blood or patient work. However, it appears that work in this situation carries about the same risk of infection experienced by health workers at risk for needle punctures. Further refinement in safety precautions for experimental lab workers may be needed, according to the researchers. No sharp equipment should be used at any time.

[A recent study of health care workers found no AIDS infection. See story page 3.]

Employee Drug Testing Leads to Heated Debate

A National Academy of Sciences workshop on alcoholism and drug abuse was the scene of a high level confrontation between the U.S. government's top drug spokesman, Ian McDonald and the editor of the prestigious *Journal of the American Medical Association*, *JAMA*, according to a report in *Science* magazine.

The federal government is actively promoting pre-employment drug screening and 'for cause' testing of employees for marijuana, cocaine, amphetamines opiates and PCP. [A federal court has ruled that the government's proposed across-the-board testing program was illegal, thus limiting the current program to 'for cause' employees with obvious symptoms of drug usage.]

But *JAMA* editor George Lundberg labelled the program "chemical McCarthyism" because of the large number of false positives, where non-

users appear to be users. Lundberg also cited the potential for employee cheating, where 'safe' urine is submitted for testing by the employee rather than his or her own. He suggested that the government will need a "corps of trained micturation observers," physician jargon for urination watchers, to ensure quality control.

Hotel Maids Reprised

When the Copley Plaza Hotel in Boston posted a notice that chambermaids will use "no mops" but instead scrub the floors by hand, using "as many clean rags as you need," the maids, their union and local feminists groups protested vigorously. The policy was reversed by management. In years past musculoskeletal problems of the knees was a common occupational illness called 'housemaids' knees' among chambermaids and housecleaners. Its resurgence in Boston appears to have been avoided.

Court Upholds Union's Need to Know and Inspect Plants

A union has a right to first-hand information affecting the health and safety of workers, including the right to access to a workplace for inspection purposes.

The 2nd Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals ruled that the Chemical Workers Union's industrial hygienist had the right to inspect a Hercules Chemical dynamite facility following a fatal accident. The hygienist had been barred from the premises.

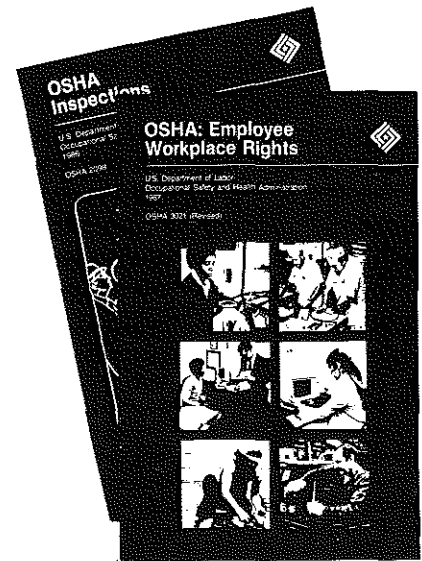
The Court ruled that a worker's life takes precedence over a company's property rights, although a union can be required to accommodate legitimate employer concerns.

AT&T Pregnancy Policy Biased; 30,000 Share Award

A nine-year battle between what is now AT&T Technologies, formerly the Western Electric Division of American Telegraph and Telephone Co. has ended with the United States Court of Appeals for Northern Illinois ruling that the company's policy which forced pregnant women to leave the jobs, even when physically able to work, was gender based discrimination.

The effects of this policy were both to deny the women employment and also to lose seniority during their time off the job. The company provided sick leave and seniority maintenance for up to one year for other workers 'disabled' from work.

The suit had been brought by the Communications Workers of America, CWA, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, EEOC, and a number of individual female claimants. As many as 30,000 present and former female employees will share the multi-million dollar back pay and seniority settlement.



Knowing Your OSHA Rights

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration has recently revised on *Employee Workplace Rights* and makes other brochures available, such as *Your Workplace Rights in Action* and *All About OSHA*. Every worker should have copies of these books, especially employees of small shops and offices. Although small workplaces are not scheduled for un-requested OSHA inspections, all OSHA laws apply to the small shop. OSHA investigators will check sites in response to employee complaints and will assist employers with their health and safety questions. The blue pages of your telephone directory (U.S. Department of Labor) will help you reach an OSHA representative, or you can write to OSHA Publications Office, Room N-3101, 200 Constitution Ave, NW, Washington, DC 20210 for your copies.