

FEDERAL NEWS WEEKLY SUMMARY CONTINUED



productive system of laboratory animals. About 7,600 workers face significant exposures, averaging as high as 10 ppm. (No U.S. workers are likely to be exposed at OSHA's former PEL of 1000 ppm.) Compliance with the BD standard is expected to cost employers about \$2.9 million per year.

The final standard, which is expected to prevent at least 79 cancer deaths over a 45-year working lifetime, also includes a 15-minute short-term exposure limit (STEL) of 5 ppm and an action level of 0.5 ppm. Other provisions cover employee training, medical surveillance, record keeping, hazard communication and exposure monitoring.

A unique feature of the standard is an exposure goal program, which encourages employers to reduce exposures to below the action level.

—U.S. DEPT. OF LABOR
10/28/96

WORKERS, RETIREES URGED TO KNOW THEIR RIGHTS REGARDING HEALTH CARE BENEFITS IN RETIREMENT

■(WASHINGTON) Labor Secretary Robert B. Reich Monday issued an advisory aimed at helping workers and retirees protect their health care in retirement and he promised his agency would continue efforts to ensure that companies honor their pension promises.

Citing the threat of health benefit losses to thousands of former employees of General Motors and Pabst Brewing Co., Reich expressed concern for the plight of retirees when employer-promised health benefits evaporate.

Many people nearing retirement age or already retired may believe they have health coverage only to discover clauses in their benefit packages that allow employers to void that part of the agreement.

Labor Department statistics indicate a steady decline in retiree health coverage by U.S. companies. In many cases, the companies dropped retired workers who believed they had been promised benefits for life.

To help retirees and workers understand their health programs, the department's Pension and Welfare Benefits Administration unveiled an advisory which highlights things they need to know. Reich noted that the key to understanding health benefits rests in the documents governing benefit programs. Workers should:

- ✓ Get copies of their company's plan

documents to begin understanding what actually has been promised.

✓ Review the plan's summary plan description and other written plan documents with the following questions in mind: "Does my company promise health benefits after retirement? If so, for how long and at what level? Does the plan documents include language that allows my employer to reduce or terminate my benefits?"

Free copies of the advisory can be obtained by calling PWBA's Publication Hotline at 202/219-9247.

—U.S. DEPT. OF LABOR
10/29/96

THE EFFECT OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN THE WORKPLACE

■(WASHINGTON) To help educate the public on the effects of "domestic violence" in the workplace, the U.S. Department of Labor Women's Bureau has released a fact sheet on this devastating problem. "Domestic Violence: A Workplace Issue" details this underrecognized issue and provides women, employers, unions, and organizations with the latest sources for information and support.

"It used to be that when you heard the phrase 'domestic violence' you thought only of violence in the home," says Labor Secretary Robert B. Reich. "In fact, domestic violence follows thousands of women to work everyday, and the Labor Department wants to make sure that they know where to go for help."

Recent studies show that domestic violence can interfere with a woman's ability to get, perform or keep a job. These problems which range from tardiness, missing work, and poor performance can ultimately lead to strong reprimands or job dismissal.

For a copy of the fact sheet, contact the Women's Bureau at (800) 827-5335.

—U.S. DEPT. OF LABOR
10/29/96

"Trade and commerce, if they were not made of Indian rubber, would never manage to bounce over the obstacles which legislators are continually putting in their way."

Henry David Thoreau
Civil Disobedience
1849

HAZARDOUS MATERIAL TRANSPORT COMPANY PLEADS GUILTY TO FALSIFYING DRIVER WORK RECORDS

■(WASHINGTON) The U.S. Department of Transportation's Office of Inspector General on Monday announced that on Oct. 10, Suburban Paraco Corporation (SPC), a subsidiary of Paraco Gas Corporation of Purchase, NY, a business that transports and sells propane, pleaded guilty in federal court in White Plains, NY, to falsifying daily driver logs in violation of federal safety regulations applicable to carriers of hazardous materials.

According to the one-count criminal information, approximately 93 driver daily logs prepared by SPC drivers from March 1992 through July 1994 and maintained at SPC offices were false. The driver daily logs are required by federal regulations to ensure drivers transporting hazardous materials are provided with adequate rest periods. The majority of the 93 SPC logs falsely stated that the drivers were off duty for the required rest periods, when, in fact, the drivers were on duty.

SPC, represented by its chief executive officer, Joseph Armentano, admitted that agents of the corporation falsified driver daily logs, knowing that it was unlawful to do so.

"This prosecution is part of on-going efforts by the Department of Transportation to combat criminal activity affecting the safety of the nation's highways," said Joyce N. Fleischman, Acting Inspector General for the Department of Transportation.

—U.S. DEPT. OF TRANSPORTATION
10/30/96

CLAIMS FOR UNEMPLOYMENT INCREASED SLIGHTLY

■(WASHINGTON) In the week ending Oct. 26, the advance figure for seasonally adjusted initial claims was 342,000, an increase of 23,000 from the previous week's revised figure of 319,000. The 4-week moving average was 331,250, an increase of 250 from the previous week's revised average of 331,000.

The advance seasonally adjusted insured unemployment rate was 2.1 percent for the week ending Oct. 19, unchanged from the prior week's unrevised rate of 2.1 percent.

The advance number for seasonally adjusted insured unemployment during the

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