Maintenance Workers Must Maintain Safety



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Meeting Kit

Maintenance employees are confronted with many hazards that can cause injury or death.

One such hazard is exposure to asbestos. This exposure can be the result of performing tasks, such as repairing pipes, stringing telephone cable or installing new electrical wires.

The asbestos hazard

Employees who work in areas that contain asbestos, but who do not remove asbestos, must be trained as associated workers. If you are an associated worker, you need initial training in the hazards of asbestos and the ways to protect yourself and others from exposure. Included in this training, which must be repeated annually, will be methods on the use of respirators, cleaning up loose asbestos and establishing protective zones to prevent exposure to others in the area. Typically, asbestos removal on a large scale is performed by outside contractors who have been specially trained on how to perform this work in a safe manner.

Exposure

The work of maintenance employees carries them throughout the facility. Maintenance workers in a health care facility, for example, travel through patient care areas and into Maintenance Workers Must Maintain Safety

laboratories. They have the potential of exposing workers to a number of hazards, such as infection, vapors emitted from glue in floor tiles or the vapors of paint used to freshen up walls.

Communicate the hazards

Under the “Hazard Communication Standard,” as dictated by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, an important obligation exists. This obligation requires maintenance staff to discuss hazards with managers and other workers so they can be prepared to take action to protect themselves.

Maintenance workers may be exposed o a variety of chemicals used in their tasks or used in the areas they working. Not only must the maintenance department share information about the work it performs and the materialist uses, workers in other departments must warn maintenance employees about the potential hazards they will be exposed to. This includes steps they might need to take to protect themselves.

Precautions could include personal protective equipment and other controls.

Remember, hazard communication is a two-way street.