HAZARD ALERT

CPWR
THE CENTER FOR CONSTRUCTION RESEARCH AND TRAINING

BERYLLIUM

What is it?

Beryllium is a metal used for decades in nuclear weapons and energy production. Its use is growing in other industries like electronics. It has also been found in coal and copper slags used for abrasive blasting and paint removal.

Breathing in beryllium dust or touching surfaces contaminated with beryllium dust can lead to Chronic Beryllium Disease (CBD). CBD is a serious scarring illness of the lungs that can cause cough, shortness of breath, and fatigue.

HANFORD NUCLEAR RESERVATION, WASHINGTON STATE

Am I in Danger?

If you are working in a facility where beryllium is or has been used you may be exposed to beryllium dust.

If you use coal or copper slag abrasives – or do "hot work" (welding or brazing) with beryllium alloys – you are also at increased risk of exposure.

Your employer must provide you with a safe and healthy workplace!

What can be done to prevent exposure to beryllium?

Find out more about construction hazards.

Get more of these Hazard Alert cards – and cards on other topics.

Call 301-578-8500

Before beginning work ...

If there is a risk of airborne beryllium in the work area, your exposure should be monitored

1 TEST for exposure

Your employer should make sure you are not exposed by testing for beryllium dust in the air. Blood testing may also be used to identify sensitization to beryllium, which increases risk for disease.

A supplied-air respirator provides a high level of protection

2 REDUCE exposure

Where possible, your employer should substitute safer products for any containing beryllium! If that's not possible, your employer should provide local exhaust ventilation, respirators, and gloves, plus soap and water for hand washing. Protect yourself with use of the correct type of respirator and gloves.

3 TAKE SPECIAL CARE when BLASTING!

Make sure you are wearing a full air-supplied blasting hood with an assigned protection factor of 1000.

Help is available for former workers at nuclear weapons sites!

Construction workers who worked on nuclear weapons sites are eligible for free medical screening to identify symptoms of beryllium exposure and other health hazards related to their work. For information about screening contact CPWR.

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If you think you are in danger:

Contact your supervisor.
Contact your union.
Call OSHA
1-800-321-OSHA

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