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## ISSUE HIGHLIGHTS:

### **Car Repair Can Lead to Asbestos Exposure From Brake & Clutch Dust**

Asbestos has been a component of brake pads and linings, clutch facings and various gaskets for many years. Millions of brakes and clutches on cars, trucks, and on auto parts shelves still contain dangerous levels of the material, although it is not generally used in the production of new brakes or clutches.

You cannot tell if a brake or clutch contains asbestos just by looking at it. Therefore, auto mechanics and do-it-yourself auto enthusiasts should proceed as if all brakes and clutches contained asbestos.

### **Safety Is a Responsibility**

Workplace safety is an important issue for all small-business owners. When accidents result from not following safety regulations and procedures, companies can face liability lawsuits and steep fines. That's not to mention lost productivity and increased workers' compensation costs. But more important, every small business owner has a moral and ethical obligation to create a safe environment for his or her employees.

(Please see page two for full article)

### **Hazards for Auto Mechanics: Asbestos Brakes and Clutches**

As asbestos brake and clutch materials wear down through normal automobile use, asbestos-containing dust is released to the outside environment. Much of this material also becomes trapped within the clutch space or brake housing. The asbestos can then be released when repair and replacement work is done. Using compressed air or vacuuming the brake residue with a regular shop or home vacuum further spreads the asbestos dust.

Mechanics who service and repair brakes and clutches risk heavy exposure to asbestos. Using a compressed air hose to clean drum brakes can release millions of asbestos fibers in the air around the mechanic's face. Even hitting a brake drum with a hammer can release fibers.

Besides being highly likely to breath in asbestos fibers, mechanics can get asbestos on their hands, swallowing small particles when eating. And once released into the air, asbestos lingers in the shop and can be breathed by customers as well as by the mechanics. The mechanic may also carry asbestos dust home on work clothing, endangering family members.

### **Minimizing Asbestos Brake Dangers**

For auto shops that do five or more brake jobs per year, government regulations require the use of special equipment to reduce asbestos exposure. One method requires a transparent enclosure around the brake system and clean up with a vacuum that has a HEPA or High Efficiency Particulate Air filter. In another procedure, low-pressure spray equipment is used to wet down the brake assembly and the runoff is collected in a basin. Auto mechanics must also dispose of asbestos brake and clutch dust in sealed, labeled, impermeable containers.

Although various methods of reducing asbestos dust in garages and repair shops are available, whether or not they are used is another question. Over a three month period, investigators from the Seattle Post-Intelligencer recovered high levels of asbestos dust from floors, work areas and tool bins in brake repair garages in Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, Denver, Richmond, Seattle, and Washington, D.C. The study may be just one example of the many repair shops and garages that continue to pose health hazards to their employees and the public.

*Article taken from the AsbestosNetwork.com*



## **AUTOMOTIVE SAFETY ASSOCIATION (ASA)**

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A May 2012 survey conducted by Staples found that 70 percent of companies have an emergency communication plan, but almost half of employees surveyed say that are not aware of it. Similarly, half of workers reported that safety drills at their workplace are either infrequent or non-existent. And sadly, the survey also revealed that the majority of non-managers couldn't locate safety supplies, such as defibrillators, eyewash and dust masks. Patricia Kagerer, vice president of risk and safety management for C.F. Jordan Construction in Dallas says that safety and profitability are intimately linked. "By embracing safety as part of the overall strategic plan of the organization, a company can be more competitive and save money," she says.

## Getting Educated

Your first stop to learn about workplace safety regulations for your industry should be the [Occupational Health & Safety Administration](#) website. You should also be in compliance with safety regulations from any licensing or regulatory agencies for your industry. Be sure to check your state-specific rules for areas such elevators, fire codes and building codes.

**Post signs.** An area that many businesses overlook is [OSHA signage requirements](#). Check carefully to see where you need safety signs. Signage must conform to rules for color size and language, such as and yellow with black letters for caution. Many situations require a specific emblem to be on the sign, such as biological hazard symbol. Signs must also have rounded corners and be fastened safely to the wall.

**Get all employees on the same page.** Safety training should be integrated into your daily routine and not something that happens a few times a year. Conduct training sessions on routine procedures and emergency procedures, including having demonstrations by fire and emergency management professionals. Consider holding weekly safety meetings (or even daily in high risk industries) to address concerns and review safety procedures, such as showing employees proper ways to lift heavy equipment.

**Know the drill.** Brainstorm what emergencies may arise in your facility and plan regular drills for these situations. In addition to surprise fire drills, consider having planned drills for extreme situations, such as an explosion or medical emergencies. You should also have employees practice for simple accidents, such as falls from ladders or injuries from lifting.

**Measure safety results.** By keeping detailed records of any accidents or issues with employees not following safety procedures, you can focus your training or modify your procedure. To achieve management commitment and employee involvement a safety process must show its impact. Post the number of days since an accident in a prominent location to raise staff awareness.

**Offer safety prizes.** Some companies reward employees with gift cards to restaurants and stores when a team goes a month without an accident. Other incentives include bonus vacation time for attending additional safety classes or hosting an office event when goals are met.

As you address workplace safety, make an effort to integrate it into the culture of the company. And most importantly, make sure that your employees see you putting safety at priority in all of your actions. By being a good example, your employees will be more likely to follow.

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