

An Insight to an Asbestos Laborer

Abstract

Asbestos laborers are often overlooked and not cared for much in construction projects. While they are often forgotten in the construction industry they play a big role in most remodels or demolition projects. Abatement workers are exposed to the dangers of asbestos on a daily.

Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) are the federal agencies that regulate asbestos. The EPA regulates the use, transportation and disposal of asbestos, while OSHA sets the standards for work involving asbestos minerals. OSHA has regulations that demolition and/or abatement contractors must comply with since asbestos is considered a hazardous material. The data collected for this paper was to focus on what laborers, superintendents and others working in the industry think about this work. I wanted to see how dangerous they felt their work is and to identify areas in which OSHA could improve its safety standards for asbestos workers. The data collected was based on companies in the Bay Area, California and laborers from Laborers Local 67 in Oakland, California.

Key Points From Interviews/Surveys

- The younger the workers are the more concerned they are regarding their health
- 50% of laborers that I interviewed believed there should be a way for OSHA to verify if standards are being followed by contractors.
- Laborers, superintendents and union personnel believed asbestos laborer should be paid more considering they currently get paid very little compared to other trades.
- One superintendent proposed that all demolition workers should be asbestos, lead and mold certified. On top of that, they should wear respirators because no one really knows what materials are present.
- The same superintendent said he feels like regular demolition workers are more at risk than regular asbestos workers.

