



U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Applicability Determination Index

Control Number: C12

Category: Asbestos
EPA Office: HQ
Date: 05/04/1984
Title: Wet Removal by Vacuum Truck
Recipient: Shaw, Stan
Author: Alm, Alvin L.
Comments: The term "deposition" is no longer included in the "no visible emissions" restrictions in s.61.150(a).

Subparts: Part 61, M, Asbestos

References: 61.145(c)
61.150(a)
61.154

Abstract:

The method employed by the "Guzzler" (wet removal by a large HEPA vacuum truck) is acceptable, provided that either no visible emissions occur during the collection, transporting, or deposition of the waste and the waste is deposited at an acceptable site, or that certain work practice procedures specified in the regulations are followed.

Letter:

UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

MAY 4, 1984

Stan Shaw, President, NAC, ASSE
Southern Fiber Control Technologies, Inc.
3828 Oakcliff Industrial Court
Building 5
Doraville, GA 30340

Dear Mr. Shaw:

Thank you for your January 31, 1984 letter, which expresses concern over regulations dealing with the packaging and disposal of asbestos wastes. Your concern arose because of an asbestos removal process using a vacuum loader called the "Guzzler". In this process, large HEPA vacuum trucks remove asbestos debris instead of sweeping, shoveling, and bagging. The asbestos is wetted and vacuumed up wet. More water is added into the truck to make a slurry of the waste and it is dumped in slurry form into an acceptable landfill and immediately covered with soil. You felt this disposal method would have harmful environmental consequences and should not be allowed, and you raised a series of questions concerning this method.

I appreciate the time and concern that went into your letter. I have asked my staff to study these concerns.

Asbestos wastes are not hazardous wastes under the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act. However, EPA is currently considering including asbestos on its list of commercial chemical products that are hazardous when discarded.

The only standards which currently apply to the disposal of asbestos wastes are those under the National Emission Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants set under the authority of the Clean Air Act. These regulations were promulgated in the April 5, 1984 Federal Register, pages 13658-13665. A copy of these regulations is enclosed. They require that there be no visible emissions to the outside air during the collection, processing, packaging, transporting, or deposition of any asbestos-containing waste material generated by an affected source. Additionally, all such waste material must be deposited at an acceptable waste disposal site.

Rather than meet the no visible emissions standard, an owner or operator may elect to treat the waste with water to form a slurry, seal the slurry into leak-tight containers with warning labels, and deposit the containers at disposal sites operated in accordance with certain provisions. The major provision is that no visible emissions occur from any disposal site unless the site is covered daily with 15 cm of compacted non-asbestos material or a dust suppression agent which effectively binds dust. Additionally, warning signs and fences are required if a dust suppression agent is used or if no natural barrier adequately deters public access.

In answer to your specific questions:

1. The method employed by the Guzzler is acceptable, provided that either no visible emissions occur during the collection, transporting, or deposition of the waste and the waste is deposited at an acceptable site or that certain work practice procedures specified in the regulations are followed. However, EPA does not expect visible emissions if materials are disposed of while wet. The generator of the asbestos waste is responsible for ensuring no visible emissions occur after the material has dried. In developing the asbestos standard, EPA did not intend to require a particular method, but rather wanted to leave it up to an individual source to determine the most efficient method of compliance consistent with effective asbestos control.

2,3,4. You asked if EPA had evaluated this method of control. A 1980 study attempted to evaluate the vacuum loader method, but results were inconclusive and the study was discontinued because of other priorities. EPA is currently reviewing the entire asbestos standard and will consider this study when determining how widespread the vacuum loader method is and what the environmental impact is. Any changes to the standard as a result of the review are scheduled to be proposed in May 1985.

EPA is also investigating the need for more stringent landfill disposal requirements. This is becoming an increasing concern because the asbestos-in-schools rule has stimulated the removal of a significant amount of asbestos. Should this investigation show that additional control of asbestos waste disposal is needed, use of the Guzzler or other abatement technology must be consistent with whatever additional controls are adopted.

5. It is incorrect to say that this removal system is "EPA approved". EPA has not approved any specific method; rather, EPA finds any method acceptable if it meets the standard. EPA cannot give blanket approval to a system because the same system could be either achieving or violating the standard, depending upon whether it is being operated or maintained properly.

6,7. Your concerns regarding exhaust air filtration of only larger-sized particles are also concerns of EPA, and the review of the asbestos standard will examine this issue.

8. The only information available concerning the testing of these vacuum trucks is the previously-mentioned 1980 study. A copy is provided. EPA will be gathering additional data on this method as needed.

9. EPA is giving a high priority to enforcement of the asbestos waste disposal provisions, as well as other provisions of the asbestos standard. Additionally, delegated States share the responsibility for enforcing the regulations. I strongly urge you, should you observe a potential violation, to notify the State and EPA immediately.

If you have additional questions concerning our program to assure compliance with the asbestos air standard, please contact Ed Reich at (202) 382-2807. If you have questions concerning the standard itself, please contact Jack Farmer at (919) 541-5571.

In conclusion, I want to thank you for your letter and promise that your concerns will be given careful consideration in the current review of the asbestos standard.

Sincerely,

Alvin L. Alm
Deputy Administrator

Enclosures