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# Beryllium: U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration Final Rule Amending Existing Standards for Occupational Exposure

## Arkansas Environmental, Energy, and Water Law Blog

01/10/2017

The United States Occupational Safety and Health Administration ("OSHA") issued a final rule amending its existing standards for occupational exposure to beryllium and beryllium compounds.

The final rule contains standards for the general industry, construction and shipyards.

OSHA states it has determined that employees exposed to beryllium at the previous permissible exposure limits ("PELs") face a significant risk of material impairment to their health (i.e., referencing increased risk of developing chronic beryllium disease and lung cancer).

The revised PEL consists of 0.2 micrograms of beryllium per cubic meter of air (0.2 ug/m3) as an eight-hour time-weighted average and 2.0 ug m3 as a short-term exposure limit determined over a sampling period of 15 minutes.

The rule also includes provisions requiring employers to:

- Use engineering and work practice controls (such as ventilation or enclosure) to limit work exposure to beryllium
- Provide respirators when controls cannot adequately limit exposure
- Limit worker access to high-exposure areas
- Develop a written exposure control plan
- Train workers on beryllium hazards
- Make available medical exams to monitor exposed workers and provide medical removal protection benefits for workers identified with a beryllium-related disease

Beryllium is described as a lightweight but strong metal used principally in the aerospace defense industries. Beryllium-copper alloy is stated to be the most common use because of its electrical and thermal conductivity, high strength and hardness, good corrosion resistance, and nonmagnetic properties. In addition, Beryllium oxide is stated to be an excellent heat conductor with high strength and hardness, and acts as an electrical insulator in some applications.

The three standards contained in the final rule take effect on March 10, 2017. All three sectors have one year (March 12, 2018) to comply with most of the requirements.

[A link to the final rule can be found here.](#)