NEVADA OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH REVIEW BOARD

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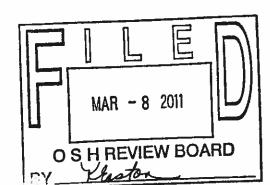
CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER OF THE OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH ADMINISTRATION, DIVISION OF INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY,

Complainant,

vs.

WALKER SPECIALTY CONSTRUCTION,

Respondent.



Docket No. LV 10-1432

DECISION

This matter having come before the NEVADA OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND **HEALTH REVIEW BOARD** at a hearing commenced on the 8th day of February 2011, in furtherance of notice duly provided according to law, MR. JOHN WILES, ESQ., counsel appearing on behalf of the Complainant, Chief Administrative Officer of Occupational the Safety Health Administration, Division of Industrial Relations (OSHA); and MR. SHAN DAVIS, ESQ., counsel appearing on behalf of Respondent, WALKER SPECIALTY CONSTRUCTION; the NEVADA OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH REVIEW BOARD finds as follows:

Jurisdiction in this matter has been conferred in accordance with Chapter 618 of the Nevada Revised Statutes.

The complaint filed by the OSHA sets forth allegations of violation of Nevada Revised Statutes as referenced in Exhibit "A", attached thereto.

Citation 1, Item 1, charges violation of 29 а CFR

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1926.1101(f)(1)(iii). The complainant alleged the respondent employer failed to perform representative 30 minute short-term employee exposure air sampling during the time most likely to produce exposures above the excursion limit as required by the standard. The violation was classified as Serious. The proposed penalty for the alleged violation is in the amount of \$800.00.

Citation 1, Item 2, charges a violation of 29 CFR 1926.1101(k)(8)(I). The complainant alleged the employer failed to affix asbestos waste container labels to an enclosed work truck. The violation was classified as "Serious". The proposed penalty was assessed in the amount of \$800.00.

Complainant presented testimony and documentary evidence with regard to the alleged violations. Mr. Paul Estrada an OSHA Safety and Health Representative ("SHR"), testified as to his inspection and the citations issued to the employer.

Citation 1, Item 1, referenced 29 CFR 1926.1101(f)(1)(iii), which provides:

"Representative 8-hour TWA employee exposure shall be determined on the basis of one or more samples representing full-shift exposure for employees in each work area. Representative 30-minute short-term employee exposures shall be determined on the basis of one or more samples representing 30 minute exposures associated with operations that are most likely to produce exposures above the excursion limit for employees in each work area."

Mr. Estrada conducted a comprehensive inspection of the employer's worksite located at the Sierra Vista Apartments in Las Vegas, Nevada on or about March 9, 2010 and May 13, 2010. He identified complainant exhibits stipulated in evidence as follows: Exhibit 1, the Investigative Report and packet prepared after the inspection, Exhibit 2, four (4) photographs taken by the SHR during the inspection, and Exhibit 3,

labeling requirements required under the standard.

Mr. Estrada testified he observed employees of respondent working in and around an asbestos containment area. The employees were engaged in removal and cleanup of asbestos material generally identified as ceiling, wall and tile components. Employees were removing asbestos material from at least three (3) apartments located on the property. Due to fire, the apartments were vacant for some time and renovations were being performed. As a result of damages to the building, the respondent employer, Walker Specialty Construction, was hired to remove damaged drywall, ceiling texture and other building materials to facilitate repairs.

Mr. Estrada testified the respondent employees working inside the containment structure were wearing appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE). Air samples were collected and documented in furtherance of the company safety practice guidelines. Mr. Estrada testified the employees collected the asbestos waste material into appropriate disposal bags and each bag was sealed and labeled in accordance with OSHA standards. The bags were then loaded into an enclosed work truck for eventual transportation to a disposal site.

SHR Estrada testified that during the walk around inspection he particularly noted that while excursion sampling as required by OSHA standards was conducted by the employees, it occurred only near the end of the work day during cleanup. Mr. Estrada referenced pages 12 and 13 of Exhibit 1, which he identified as the two-day, 24 hour, air sample data sheets required under the standard. He testified that in his opinion air sampling should have been conducted throughout the day and not merely at the end of the day during cleanup because he believed other work operations were most likely to produce exposure

above the limits for employees and greater potential for more asbestos particulates to be detected in the air. He inquired of the employees working at the job site as to the best sampling time but disputed their reasoning as to why they were sampling at the end of the day rather than during the course of other work. He confirmed the employees had elected, as permitted by the company safety plan, to perform excursion sampling in their discretion at the end of the day. Mr. Estrada testified he determined the referenced standard intended samples be taken throughout the day during work activity based upon his conclusion that such testing would occur best sample a time of highest potential for exposure and therefore provide respondent and employees critical data to guide them in the appropriate protective measures to be undertaken to guard against exposure to the recognized asbestos hazards.

SHR Estrada testified as to Citation 1, Item 2 which referenced. 29 CFR 1926.1101(k)(8)(I). The standard provides:

"Labels shall be affixed to all products containing asbestos and to all containers containing such products, including waste containers. Where feasible, installed asbestos products shall contain a visible label."

He testified a company work truck was utilized to store the bagged asbestos material which had been collected from each of the apartment units subject of the employee work efforts. He was informed the materials would be hauled from the job site at the end of the work day for disposal at a designated toxic waste facility. He could not locate any labeling or signs on the truck to identify the asbestos material inside. He identified photographs at Exhibit 2 which depicted no signage on the vehicle. Mr. Estrada determined the truck to be a "container" as defined in the referenced standard, and therefore cited a violation of the CFR.

Mr. Estrada concluded his direct testimony on the classification of the two violations as "serious" and the penalty calculations. He testified as to the gravity of even minimal exposures to asbestos fibers explaining that asbestos is an identified carcinogen and well recognized to cause serious injury or death, even many years after initial exposure. Because of the high gravity, severity, and probability factors, he confirmed conditions to support the serious classification. SHR Estrada proposed penalties for both violations in accordance with the enforcement manual. He explained the penalty calculation guidelines and credits rendered based upon the company size and other relevant factors.

On cross-examination, respondent's counsel directed inquiry to the type of work observed by SHR Estrada, his background, training, and the particular conditions subject of focus during his investigation.

Counsel for respondent and complaint stipulated to the admission of respondent's exhibits without objection. The identified and marked exhibits consisted of the following: Exhibit A, a copy of the Complaint; Exhibit B, a copy of 29 CFR 1926.1101(f)(1)(iii); Exhibit C, a copy of Personal Air Monitoring; Exhibit D, a copy of the definition of "Serious Violation"; Exhibit E, 29 CFR 1926(k)(8)(I); Exhibit F, a picture of Walker's waste container; Exhibit G, a pictures of truck and sealed waste container bags; Exhibit H, a copy of Walker's proposal; Exhibit I, a copy of Western Technologies report; Exhibit J, a copy of Walker daily time log and sign-in sheet; Exhibit K, a copy of 29 CFR 1926.1101 "Definitions".

Counsel directed SHR Estrada's attention to Exhibit I, a copy of the respondent site survey report prepared by Western Technologies Inc.

Mr. Estrada testified he did not recall reviewing the asbestos site

survey during his inspection, but responded to counsel's questions regarding same. He testified as to the minimal amounts of asbestos reported as detected in each room subject of work. Counsel further directed attention to complainant's Exhibit 1, section 17, page 10, the respondent safety plan. Mr. Estrada read the policy which provided

"an excursion sample shall be collected for each work task during the time of the workday when you expect it to be dirtiest or potential for greater exposure. . ."

Counsel also requested the SHR review the standard and asked whether there was any directive from the company or in the standard itself regarding a specific time or condition for sampling to be undertaken. SHR Estrada testified there was nothing to so indicate in the standard; and the company safety plan left the matter of timing and conditions for excursion sampling to the discretion of the responsible employees at the site.

On continued cross-examination regarding Citation 1, Item 2, counsel directed attention to respondent's Exhibit K, the statutory definition as to waste containers. Mr. Estrada testified there was no particular description of a "waste container" as such. He further testified ". . . I guess waste bags were acting as containers . . ." Counsel asked if two containers were required by the standard or regulations, that is both bags and a truck. SHR Estrada answered the standard requires only a single container.

Mr. Estrada testified at Exhibit 1, page 5 of his investigative report, second paragraph that ". . . employees properly disposed of waste in bags and each was labeled asbestos . . ." He further testified on page 5 of Exhibit 1 that ". . . the only deficiency noted was the excursion sampling being done . . ."

At the conclusion of complainants case, respondent counsel presented evidence and testimony in defense of the alleged violations charged in the citations. Mr. Bill Walker identified himself as the owner and safety representative of the respondent employer. Не testified as to his ownership of the company, safety consciousness, and heightened personal concern for respiratory safety due to his suffering from a lung disorder caused by exposure to toxic materials. testified he is aware of the high dangers of even a 1% atmospheric Walker testified that excursion sampling asbestos exposure. Mr. required under the standard makes no reference to "when it is done" during the work day. He testified sampling is best done in the latter part of the work day when the highest fiber concentrations are in the air because the ". . . longer you work asbestos the more it's disbursed into the air . . . " He testified his company policy leaves discretion of the actual air sampling time to his well-trained and certified employees who understand they must protect themselves from exposure when the air is "dirtiest." He testified the employees exposed to the hazard potentials are best able to determine from their experience and training the most appropriate time for air sample testing.

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At Citation 1, Item 2 Mr. Walker testified that although he was not on the job site, he believed there were paper asbestos warning signs on the storage truck the day of inspection because it is a typical company practice. He testified that he believed his employees removed the paper signs at the end of the work day in preparation for transportation of the materials to the dump site because they would simply blow away if left affixed. Mr. Walker testified it is typical to remove the paper signs from the vehicle prior to transportation to the dump site and then display a placard on the vehicle while operating same. He further

testified that the truck was not the waste container described in the CFR, and therefore did not legally require labeling. He testified that the sealed bags were waste containers and properly labeled all in compliance with the standard.

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Mr. Gerardo Garcia identified himself as trained and certified in asbestos handling work and the respondent employee in charge of air sampling at the job site on the day of the inspection. He has worked in the asbestos field since 1986. He testified excursion sampling must be done when the air is the dirtiest or when concentrations are expected at the highest level. He testified that he performed the required sampling on the job site when air containment conditions were at the highest levels which was at the end of the day during cleanup. He testified that he did so because that was when the asbestos materials were the most stirred up and fibers and dust in the air at the greatest concentrations. Mr. Garcia also testified the company safety guideline a Exhibit 1, page 10, section 17, requires air sampling when conditions are the worst which he believes based on his training and experience, occurs during final bagging and cleanup at the end of the day. further testified the air sampling time frame is employee discretionary under company policy because it can depend upon the job site and the work involved.

On cross-examination Mr. Garcia testified as to the type of work being performed which included removing damaged areas of the ceiling material and sheetrock, material collection, use of wetting agents to reduce dust, and eventual bagging and labeling. He also testified that Mr. Larry Parks, a Clark County Department of Air Quality representative, was at the jobsite on the morning of the inspection and observed the additional signage was on the company truck. He testified

the signs were removed from the truck when Mr. Parks left the site and before the OSHA SHR arrived. On further cross-examination, Mr. Garcia testified that no brooms were utilized to clean up the materials because they create more dust and air contamination. A "wet method" and mop were used after picking up the larger materials by hand. A shovel and vacuum were then utilized to complete the process.

Respondent counsel presented testimony and documentary evidence from Mr. Brett Unbedacht who identified himself as a 12-year respondent employee, trained and certified in asbestos work and the operations manager for the Las Vegas Region of Walker Specialty, Inc. He testified that the subject job as very small, having only an approximate \$5,700 value. The scope of work was to merely clean up debris and "square up" holes in the ceiling materials for eventual "patchwork" replacement. He testified the company policy for excursion sampling directs that tests occur when the air is the dirtiest. He believes sampling is best conducted at the end of the day during cleanup because of the highest concentration levels at the time. He testified the particular job work was 80% cleanup so that is when sampling should have occurred.

Mr. Unbedacht testified that **bags** are the safety **containers** under the OSHA standard and are always treated as such. He testified the bags used at the site were all appropriately tied, labeled and then simply loaded into the truck for eventual transportation. He testified he did not believe the transportation truck was an asbestos "container" under the cited standard.

Complainant presented closing argument and asserted that the cited violations were very serious in nature and should be confirmed by the review board.

At Citation 1, Item 2, counsel argued that labels needed to be on

the truck similar to those on the storage containers in respondent's yard as identified in Exhibit F in evidence. The truck becomes a "container" for the bags similar to the storage bins at the yard. Because the bins were marked (labeled) at the yard, then so should the truck to be OSHA compliant.

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At Citation 1, Item 1 counsel argued that it does not make sense that air sample tests be done at the end of the day because airborne fibers would seem to be worse when sawing, trimming out and bagging are occurring throughout the work day.

Counsel further asserted the appropriateness of the penalties and classifications of "serious" be upheld because the potential for exposure to the recognized hazard was very high and deadly in nature.

Respondent presented closing argument and asserted that OSHA has the statutory burden of proof but failed to establish a case to meet that burden by any preponderance of evidence. He argued that complainant's case is based upon opinion and conjecture of what the inspecting SHR and legal counsel believe, feel or think would be the best time for air sampling, notwithstanding the lack of any specific time requirement in the standard and the opinions of three witnesses employed and experienced in the field of asbestos removal. that simply because OSHA feels the samples were not taken at the correct time it should not provide a basis for any legal decision to impose a penalty or fine under the standard which does not require a specific time or stage of work to conduct sampling. Each respondent employee testified the company policy leaves the timing for sampling to the discretion of the employees subject to exposure so they can conduct tests on each particular job site depending upon the conditions, circumstances and facts, when the air is "dirtiest . . . or when the

potential concentrations would be at the highest level." All employees air time and highest potential dirtiest the that concentrations occurred at the end of the day on the subject job site for the type of asbestos work performed based upon the nature of asbestos removal and their experience in the field. Because the employees subject to exposure were trained, certified and understand the health hazards, their testimony should be relied upon to interpret the standard which directs no specific test timing, rather than the conjecture or opinion of the SHR or legal counsel.

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Counsel submitted that a reading of the standard at Citation 1, Item 2 cannot be construed or expanded to define a transportation truck to be the asbestos "container" requiring labeling, when the undisputed facts show the recognized "containers" under the standard were the bags properly utilized on the site, sealed and labeled. He referenced the statement of the inspecting SHR at Exhibit 1 and his testimony that the storage bags were in fact "containers" under the standard. He further referenced the testimony of SHR Estrada to be that only one container is required, not two, such that labeling both the bags and a truck would be duplicitous and not required by the standard.

In reviewing the testimony, exhibits, and arguments of counsel, the board is required to measure same against the elements to establish violations under Occupational Safety & Health Law based upon the statutory burden of proof and competence of evidence.

In all proceedings commenced by the filing of a notice of contest, the burden of proof rests with the Administrator. (See NAC 618.788(1).

All facts forming the basis of a complaint must be proved by a preponderance of the evidence. See <u>Armor Elevator Co.</u>, 1 OSHC 1409, 1973-1974 OSHD ¶16,958 (1973).

To prove a violation of a standard, the Secretary applicability of the (1)establish must noncomplying existence the standard, (2) conditions, (3) employee exposure or access, and (4) that the employer knew or with the exercise of reasonable diligence could have known of violative condition. See <u>Belger Cartage Service</u>, Inc., 79 OSAHRC 16/B4, 7 BNA OSHC 1233, 1235, 1979 CCH OSHD ¶23,400, p.28,373 (No. 76-1948, 1979); Harvey Workover, Inc., 79 OSAHRC 72/D5, 7 BNA OSHC 1687, 1688-90, 1979 CCH OSHD 23,830, pp. 28,908-10 (No. 76-1408, 1979); American Wrecking Corp. v. Secretary of Labor, 351 F.3d 1254, 1261 (D.C. Cir. 2003).

A respondent may rebut allegations by showing:

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- The standard was inapplicable to the situation at issue;
- The situation was in compliance; or lack of access to a hazard. See, <u>Anning-Johnson Co.</u>, 4 OSHC 1193, 1975-1976 OSHD ¶ 20,690 (1976).

Neither the SHR nor any witnesses testified or provided any evidence that the required air sampling did not occur at the subject job However, OSHA alleged the timing of testing procedures should have occurred throughout the course of the work day to better assess the highest asbestos concentrations, rather than during "cleanup" at the end of the day which was elected by the responsible respondent employees. The sworn testimony of three respondent witnesses was that as to the subject job site, and generally, when removing or cleaning up asbestos in a confined area, it is most appropriate to conduct air sampling under the standard at the end of the work day during final cleanup and bagging of the asbestos material. Exhibit A, the company safety directive, left the actual timing of the testing over the 24-hour /30 minute sampling period to the discretion of the employees subject to exposure. All respondent employee witnesses testified that the air was both "dirtiest" and potentially at the ". . . highest (asbestos) concentrations . . ." at the end of the day during final clean up and bagging. All respondent

employee witnesses testified they were trained and certified in asbestos removal work. Substantial testimonial evidence from witnesses Garcia and Unbedacht confirmed that asbestos removal and cleanup requires the efforts of trained certified personnel due to the high dangers of the airborne particulates that may be stirred up or circulated by work activity. Mr. Walker testified that ". . . the more you work asbestos the more disbursed it becomes . . . " Mr. Garcia with 25 years of experience was responsible for the company air sampling under the standard. He determined that at the subject job site and in accordance with the company safety policy directive, his discretion constrained him to conduct testing at the end of the day when the material was being finally cleaned up, bagged and removed to the storage truck. The cited OSHA standard is silent with regard to the time of day or particular The facts are work effort being performed when testing should occur. undisputed that the required testing was accomplished under the 30 minute intervals and verified in the sample data reports, Exhibit 1, These facts, coupled with the unrefuted sworn pages 12 and 13. testimony of three witnesses, do not provide any basis for finding a violation of the cited specific standard at Citation 1, Item 1.

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The burden of proof is upon the complainant. Enforcement alternatives might have been elected if OSHA Industrial Hygienists (IHs), or Safety and Health Representatives (SHRs) or other qualified OSHA staff had any reasonable belief that concentrations were highest or the conditions were "dirtiest" at some particular time of day. For example, sampling devices could have been safety inserted into the containment area by an IH or SHR while remaining outside the area of exposure. Similarly, an IH could have used an appropriate protective mask to sample the data from the inside. None of these recognized

enforcement alternatives were elected to potentially support the OSHA charges that the air was dirtiest or bore the highest concentrations at some different stage of the work effort or time of day.

While the board could agree that it may be intuitive and/or logical to surmise that more fibers would be circulated while employees are at work cutting, sawing and working within the containment area, there was no competent evidence to prove or even support this mere logic to confirm a violation. Conversely, the sworn testimony of three witnesses, including the owner was credible and to be given due weight unless impeached. The board must review the evidence and testimony in conformance with the stated terms of the specific standard, the safety plan guidelines, and sworn testimony. To do otherwise would substitute unqualified opinions and conjecture, for evidence. The plain meaning of the standard is clear. This board has followed the plain meaning rule when required to interpret standards and law.

Caminetti v. United States, 242 U.S. 470, 485, 37 S.Ct. 192, 194, 61 L.Ed. 442 (1916) (citations omitted). Rodgers v. Rodgers, 110 Nev. 1370, 1373, 887 P.2d 269, 271 (1994) (words in statute should be given their plain meaning unless spirit of act is violated.) Sheriff v. Encoe, 110 Nev. 1317, 1319, 885 P.2d 596 (1994) (proper construction of statute is legal question rather than factual question). Neal v. Griepentrog, 108 Nev. 660, 664, 837 P.2d 432, 434 (1992) (words in statute should be given their plain meaning unless this violates spirit of act).

The board finds no evidence that the conditions were anything other than as reported in the sampling data and taken at the supervising employee's discretion when the conditions were deemed most potentially hazardous.

The admitted evidence and testimony established that respondent employees conducted air sample testing in accordance with the plain

written meaning as described under the terms of the standard. 29 CFR 1926.1101(f)(1)(iii) provides:

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"Representative 8-hour TWA employee exposure shall be determined on the basis of one or more samples representing full-shift exposure for employees in each work area. Representative 30-minute short-term employee exposures shall be determined on the basis of one or more samples representing 30 minute exposures associated with operations that are most likely to produce exposures above the excursion limit for employees in each work area."

At Citation 1, Item 2, the board finds no definition either in the cited standard or from the evidence submitted that the transportation truck in this case could be classified as a "container" and require To do so would add a second asbestos contamination labeling. confinement in addition to the storage bags which were utilized as the "containers" and properly labeled. The standard is not applicable to the facts in evidence. If the truck required labeling as a "container", it would expand the standard to require two (2) containers for labeling rather than the appropriate single container (bags) described in the standard. Again, the plain meaning of the cited standard is clear. testimony of all witnesses, including the citing SHR was that the asbestos material was properly bagged, contained and labeled and that ". . . the bags served as containers . . . " as required by the standard. Here the transportation truck could only possibly be considered a "container" under, and the standard applicable, for example asbestos materials were merely vacuumed or shoveled directly from the containment area into the vehicle and then sealed, labeled and stored for eventual transportation to a toxic waste site. That possibility was not subject of any testimony or evidence nor alleged by OSHA.

In addition to the foregoing with regard to Citation 1, Item 2, there was substantial testimonial evidence that the subject

transportation truck did in fact bear temporary paper labeling as a presumed additional compliance requirement, but removed shortly before the SHR arrived on the site to conduct his inspection. The testimony of Mr. Garcia was that the Clark County Air Quality representative observed labels on the truck the morning of the inspection, but the labels were removed prior to the arrival of the SHR as same would likely blow off during transportation. While the subject testimony may be hearsay, it was supported by Messrs. Walker and Unbedacht as to what is typically done by the company even though the truck is only a transportation vehicle. However additional labeling on the subject truck, while reasonable, prudent and good practice, it is not required for compliance with the cited standard.

Based upon the above and foregoing, the board is not required to review the classification of the proposed violations as "Serious" nor the calculation of penalties.

The board finds, as a matter of fact and law, there was no preponderance of proof of violations as to Citation 1, Item 1, 29 CFR 1926.1101(f)(1)(iii), and Citation 1, Item 2, 29 CFR 1929.1101(k)(8)(I).

It is the decision of the NEVADA OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH REVIEW BOARD that no violation of Nevada Revised Statutes did occur as to Citation 1, Item 1, 29 CFR 1926.1101(f)(1)(iii) and Citation 1, Item 2, 29 CFR 1926.1101(k)(8)(I). The classification of Citation 1, Item 1 and Item 2 as "Serious" and the proposed penalties of EIGHT HUNDRED DOLLARS (\$800.00) each are denied and dismissed.

The Board directs counsel for the respondent, WALKER SPECIALTY CONSTRUCTION, to submit proposed Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law to the NEVADA OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH REVIEW BOARD and serve copies on opposing counsel within twenty (20) days from date of

decision. After five (5) days time for filing any objection, the final Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law shall be submitted to the NEVADA OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH REVIEW BOARD by prevailing counsel. Service of the Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law signed by the Chairman of the NEVADA OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH REVIEW BOARD shall constitute the Final Order of the BOARD.

DATED: This 8th day of MARCH 2011.

NEVADA OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH REVIEW BOARD

By /s/ TIM JONES, CHAIRMAN