

ABRASIVE BLASTING

MANUFACTURERS ALLIANCE

ABRASIVE BLASTING MANUFACTURERS ALLIANCE STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO NEW YORK TIMES

On June 5, the New York Times ran a story (*Under Trump, Worker Protections Are Viewed With New Skepticism*) that repeats some common misconceptions about OSHA's beryllium exposure rule. We seek to correct the record.

The Times article does not distinguish between beryllium alloy and the mineral form of beryllium, which is found in trace amounts in abrasive blasting. This is an important distinction. Exposure to beryllium alloy and other processed forms of beryllium have indeed been found to lead to illness in some cases. However, there have been no known cases of exposure to airborne beryllium in abrasive blasting leading to illness. Scientific studies suggest that these may be the result of several factors, one of which may be a different immune response triggered by processed beryllium, which may cause chronic beryllium disease, and other forms of beryllium, which may not. It is misleading to compare two very different forms of beryllium, and counterproductive to regulate them the same way.

The Times uses the tragic example of Vishwanauth Jailall to emphasize the link between beryllium alloy exposure and health problems. Mr. Jailall's case is unrelated to abrasive blasting. The Times' portrayal of Mr. Jailall confuses two very different chemical properties.

The article also mistakenly suggests the beryllium rule is focused on coal slag with regard to abrasive blasting. In reality, the OSHA rule impacts on all abrasive blasting due to the trace amounts of airborne beryllium produced by blasting materials and/or the coatings, surfaces and substrates being blasted.

The Abrasive Blasting Manufacturers Alliance will continue to advocate a sensible regulatory framework that considers all available scientific data and regulates beryllium based on the actual risk of worker exposure.

OSHA BERYLLIUM RULE: **MYTH VS FACT**

OSHA continues to reevaluate its rule regulating worker exposure to beryllium, which does not require compliance until March 12, 2018. The Abrasive Blasting Manufacturers Alliance has been aggressively communicating to OSHA, the Administration and Members of Congress about the negative impact this misguided rule will have on our industry and the well-paying jobs it provides across the country.

We're having an impact. OSHA is considering a substantial rewrite of the Beryllium rule as it relates to the abrasive blasting industry. In the meantime, it's important to separate myth from reality and understand the OSHA rule for what it is.



MYTH: The Beryllium rule only affects blasting media containing slag. As long as I switch to a non-slag product, I don't have to deal with the Beryllium rule.

FACT: The rule affects all abrasive blasters. All blasting media and the surfaces being blasted can contain trace amounts of beryllium, which is naturally occurring in the environment. Because OSHA would set a very restrictive action level and exposure limit to beryllium, all blasters would need to comply with the regulations regardless of media.



MYTH: New regulations on abrasive blasting are inevitable in the near future. I need to switch to blasting media that are least likely to be swept up in these regulatory changes.

FACT: Abrasive blasting is already subject to 27 OSHA safety regulations, which is the basis of our push to remove our industry from the Beryllium rule. It's a winning argument, and we've seen it pay major dividends: OSHA has delayed the rule twice, and now it is reconsidering the application of the rule to our industry.

There has never been a documented case of worker illness related to beryllium exposure in abrasive blasting, due in large part to the number of safety regulations already on the books for our industry. The government overreached when it included abrasive blasting in the Beryllium rule.



MYTH: The final OSHA rule went into effect May 20; it's final. I need to make quick decisions to keep my supply chain in compliance.

FACT: The OSHA rule does not require compliance until March 12, 2018. Nothing changes until then. Additionally, OSHA is reconsidering the application of the rule to the construction and maritime industries.

Current OSHA leadership takes a different approach to business regulation than its predecessor. We believe this will work in our favor.



MYTH: I should switch from slag to another product anyway. It's less risky and just as effective – there's no cost to my company for making the switch.

FACT: Slag-based abrasives are the product of choice for many applications, and switching to an alternative media will have real costs in terms of direct spending and effectiveness. Also, again, all abrasive blasting with whatever media can be subject to the Beryllium rule.



MYTH: Whatever final rule comes out will crack down on slag, because it's hazardous. There's a "war on coal" for a reason.

FACT: All abrasive blast media, and the surfaces being blasted, can contain materials that are potentially harmful if there is direct exposure above certain levels. OSHA directly prescribes personal protective equipment for abrasive blasting, and slag-based abrasives are perfectly safe if existing OSHA regulations are followed.